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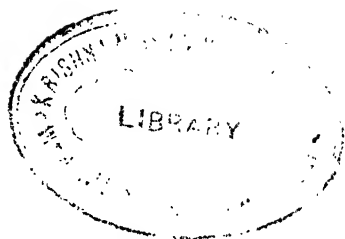














# KRISHNA AND THE PURANAS

ESSAYS ON THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF VAISHNAVISM

BY

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*or of 'The Vedanta and its Relation to Modern Thought',  
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## PREFACE

The following essays, originally contributed to the *Indian Messenger*, but now much altered and added to for the purpose of incorporation in a book, are mainly a sequel and supplement to the author's *Krishna and the Gita*. The conclusions arrived at in the first lecture of the latter, that on the "Origin and Growth of the Krishna Legend," have been set forth in a more detailed, consistent and, it is hoped, a more convincing form in the first six essays. As *Krishna and the Gita* has been out of print for some time past and may not be reprinted as early as might be wished, its second lecture, that on "The Krishna of the *Mahābhārata* and the Puranas," has been given in a condensed form in the appendix, so that readers who have not read that book and may not have the opportunity of reading it may not feel any difficulty in following the argument in the first part of this book. The remaining essays embody the result of the author's study of the chief Vaishnava Puranas and the literature of the Bengal School of Vaishnavism. They endeavour to expand the hints given in the eighth chapter and other parts of *Krishna and the Gita* as to the origin and development of Vaishnavism, specially its bifurcation into the old and the new school. To many this bifurcation is all but unknown. In Bengal specially, the identification of Vaishnavism

with the Rádhá-Krishna Cult, and even with the teachings of Chaitanya and his followers, is very common. If the present work does nothing more than clear this misconception and bring out the distinctive characteristics of the two schools, it will perhaps have done some service to the modern student of comparative theology. The object of the book, however, is mainly practical, namely to help the reader in feeling his way to that Universal Religion towards which the teachers and scriptures of all ethnic and denominational religions are contributing more or less and which, in the wise and beneficent dispensation of Providence, is to bring "on earth peace and good-will toward men." If the book renders even the least help in this respect, its composition and publication under the disadvantages of failing strength and eye-sight will be amply justified and rewarded.

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# KRISHNA AND THE PURANAS

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## I. Monotheism in the Upanishads

Some orientalists think that there is a system of Monotheism in India distinct from the Brahmováda of the Upanishads,—a system which formerly existed independently of the existing idolatrous sects of the country, but has now become practically identified with Vaishnavism. Even in its present form it is said to preserve its distinctive feature of *bhakti* or reverential love to God as the only means of union with him and give only a subordinate place to *jnána* (knowledge) and *karma* (work.) In this religion the object of worship was, as it still is, Bhagavat or Vāsudeva, conceived as a personal God distinct from the Brahman of the Upanishads, whom the dominant school of Vedantists, the Sankarites, characterise as impersonal intelligence. The present writer, though he has gone through a good deal of the literature of and about what is called the Bhágavata Dharma, has never been satisfied that it has ever been a system of pure Theism. In its purer aspects, it seems to him only an interpretation of the more or less monistic Theism of the Upanishads and in its grosser, one of those sectarian movements arising out of the deva-worship of the *Rigveda* which claimed for each

Vedic god separately,—for Indra or Varuna, Vishnu or Rudra—supremacy over the others.) Thus the Sivaites and Vishnuites seem to him to be lineal descendants of the Vedic deva-worshippers and not monotheistic sects who have degenerated into polytheists and idolators. Pure Theism, whether with a monistic or a dualistic bent, seems to us to have its source only in the Upanishads and, to have been developed,—if also disfigured in certain respects,—by those who followed their teachings. However unwilling, for certain reasons, some modern Hindu Theists may be to be indentified with the Bráhma Samáj movement, whose founder appealed mainly to the Upanishads and the literature which has grown out of them, they must know that the name 'Bráhmas' suits them better than any other. However, the subject is important and the controversy relating to it far from being closed. The Bhágavata Dharma, notwithstanding what seem to us its objectionable features, is a grand and far-reaching movement, and has affected all Indian forms of religion, including Bráhmaism which owes some of its most attractive features to it. A critical account of its history cannot therefore fail to be interesting.

That interesting and valuable series of volumes Dr. James Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, which has recently been issuing from Edinburgh, contains a long article on the *Bhakti Marga* by Mr. G. A. Grierson, lately of the Indian Civil Service and an orientalist of some repute. It professes to be

history and comprehensive account of the Bhágavata Dharma. It is full of information about the doctrines and practices of the various sects of Vaishnavism, information which is really valuable to those who have no access to the original authorities on the subject. What is refreshing in the article is the spirit of sympathy that runs through it,—something very rare in Christian writers, and Mr. Grierson writes not as an uninterested critic, but as an ardent Christian. However, the perusal of the article leaves us, we must confess, where we were before on the point mentioned above. In spite of the writer's attempt to trace the origin of Bhágavatism from the earliest times of our national history, we remain unconvinced that it was a Theistic movement distinct from the "Brahmaism," as he calls the Brahmováda, of the Upanishads. According to Mr. Grierson the purely Vedic religion, whether polytheistic or pantheistic, was developed in the Midland of India, the country round about Delhi, whereas Bhágavatism arose in the Outland, the country to the east, south and west of the Midland. It was first conceived and developed by the Kshatriyas and was afterwards accepted by the Brahmanas and became a part of the Brahmanical religion. Janaka, Jaivali, Ajátasatru and Asvapati are said to be some of the earliest teachers of this Monotheism. But really these are all teachers of the Upanishadic Brahmováda from which Mr. Grierson seeks to distinguish the Bhágavata Dharma. His references to them are quite beside the mark and tend to amuse rather than enlighten a student of the Upani-



shads. No less amusing is the Mention of Yájnavalkya in this connection. Yájnavalkya was not a Kshatriya, but a Bráhmaṇa, and his teachings in the *Bṛihadá-ranyaka* Upanishad tend to emphasise rather the 'pantheistic' than the theistic aspect of the religion of the Upanishads. They actually furnished the later Vedantic Monists like Sankaráchárya with their most powerful arguments. As to the Kshatriya teachers mentioned in the Upanishads, their contribution to the Upanishadic theology, though most important, cannot be said to have made for Theism while the Bráhmaṇic contribution made for Pantheism, as Mr. Grierson tries to make out, under what guidance we do not know. The Kshatriyas indeed claim, in the Upanishads, to have discovered some truths and taught them to the Bráhmaṇas, but these were eschatological rather than philosophical doctrines, as will be evident from the passage in which the Kshatriyas' theological supremacy over the Brahmanas is most clearly asserted (*Chhándogya* v. 3-10). There are indeed two more or less distinct lines of speculation in the Upanishads, both fundamentally monistic in their character, (but one emphasising the unity and either ignoring or minimising the difference, and the other showing that the unity was not inconsistent with the difference.) The two tendencies are sometimes to be met with in the same Upanishad, one chapter of which, for instance, represents the first and another the second, showing different authorship or difference of mood in the same author. But roughly speaking, the *Bṛihadá-ranyaka*,

among the larger Upanishads, may be said to follow the former line, and the *Chhândogya* and the *Kaushîtaki* the latter. This gave rise to two schools of Vedantic interpretation from the earliest times—the schools which Sankara and Rámánuja avowedly followed in later times. If this difference can be said to be one of Theism and Pantheism, it is nevertheless both Upanishadic in its origin and falls within Brahma-vádá or 'Brahmaism', being varieties of fundamentally the same movement, and not antagonistic ones owing their origin to different castes or countries, as Mr. Grierson tries to make out.

The Bhágavata Dharma took definite shape, according to Mr. Grierson, at the hands of Vàsudeva, whom he, under the guidance of Profs. Garbe and Bhándárkár, identifies with Krishna, the son of Devakî. {We will show that Vàsudeva was originally only a particular conception of God and not a historical person, and that Krishna's historicity as a religious teacher is more than doubtful.

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## II. Vaśudeva and Krishna

In the Encyclopædia article referred, to Mr. Grierson, speaking of the origin and development of Indian Theism, says :—“Under any circumstances, whether this Monotheism was a development of sun-worship or not, the following facts may be taken as accepted by most students of the subject :—The founder of the religion was one Kṛṣṇa (Krishna) Vāsudeva, a Ksatria. His father’s name was Vasudeva (hence the patronymic of Vāsudeva) and his mother’s Devakī. He was the pupil of a sage named Ghora Angirasa, who taught him, ‘so that he never thirsted again.’ (*Chhândogya Upanishad*. III. 17. 6.) He belonged to the Sātvata sect of the Outland Yadava tribe. In the older parts of the *Māhabhārata* he appears in the twofold character of a mighty warrior and of a religious reformer. He called the object of his worship the *Bhagavat*, or the Adorable : and his followers called themselves Bhāgavatas, or ‘worshippers of the Adorable.’ The religion was first adopted by the people of his own tribe, and gradually spread over the greater part of the Outland. Before the fourth century B. C., as in the case of the founders of many other religions, he was himself given divine honours, and under his patronymic of Vāsudeva became identified with the Adorable. In the original form the religion was strongly monotheistic. Vāsudeva taught that the Supreme Being was infinite, eternal, and full of grace,

and that salvation consisted in a life of perpetual bliss." In a footnote Mr. Grierson adds :—"In the above, and in what follows, the present writer has freely utilized the researches of Prof. Bhandarkar and Prof. Garbe, whose conclusions have been amply borne out by his own inquiries. It must, however, be explained that some Sanskrit scholars are not prepared to accept these statements in their entirety." Now we shall give some idea of the reasons why these statements, specially those about Krishna being the founder of Bhāgavatism, are unacceptable.

In IV. 3. 98 of the *Sūtras* of Panini, which, so far as recent antiquarian research indicates, belong to the fourth century B. C., Vāsudeva and Arjuna are mentioned as gods who had worshippers, and in another *sūtra*, "गोवृद्धिर्वाख्यो बुद्ध", he speaks of the same words as names of Kshatriyas. That Vāsudeva and Arjuna were originally gods, the latter a name of Indra, and the former of Vishnu, is often forgotten, and in all mention of these words they are taken as identical with the Kshatriyas, historical or mythical, named after the gods. In this country, as perhaps in others also, men are often named after gods. In all these cases it must be remembered that the gods,—we mean the conception of them—preceded the men named after them. Mr. Grierson's identification of the Kshatriya Vāsudeva, if any such person at all existed, with the god of that name, and his statement that 'Vāsudeva' is a patronymic of 'Vasudeva', Krishna's supposed father, are groundless. It will be seen as we proceed, that the whole genealogy

of the Yādavas bears the character of a 'pious' fabrication to establish the historicity and divinity of Krishna. However, we meet with Vāsudeva as a god again in II. 2.42 and the following aphorisms of the *Vedānta Sūtras*, which probably belong to the same period as Panini. This is perhaps the oldest mention of the Bhāgavata-Pancharātra doctrine. The doctrine is that the Divine Being has four aspects,—Vāsudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Vāsudeva is the Supreme Self in its totality, Sankarshana is the finite self proceeding from it, Pradyumna is *manas*, the sensorium, and Aniruddha is *ahankāra*, egoity. This is a purely philosophical doctrine, unexceptionable in its essence, but objectionable to the author of the *Sūtras* and his commentator, Sankara, if it means that the process of *jīva* or the finite self from the Supreme Self is a process in time, which makes the former non-eternal and thus its final union with the latter impossible. However, if we are to believe the Mahābhāratic and Puranic genealogy on which Mr. Grierson and his guides seem to rely, not only was Vāsudeva the son of Vasudeva, but Sankarshana was Vāsudeva's half-brother, the same as Balarāma, Pradyumna was Vāsudeva's son, and Aniruddha his grandson! Coming now to the *Mahābhārata* and the Vaishnava Puranas, whose one aim may be said to be the establishment of their god Krishna's divinity, we find these authorities admitting, in the form of legends relating to Sishupāla, Śālva, Paundra etc., that their attempts to establish this doctrine met with much opposition and even cost

bloodshed. All this shows the unreasonableness of the identification of Krishna with Vāsudeva. The legend about Paundra is most clear about the point. It is given in the 66th chapter of the 10th canto of the *Bhāgavata Purana*. Paundra was the king of Karusha, He declared himself as the incarnation of Vāsudeva, was recognised by his followers as such and sent a messenger to Krishna calling upon him to give up the name he had falsely assumed—'*Mithyābhidhām tyaja*'—deliver to him the divine insignia he had assumed, or come and fight with him. We need not give the sequel to the story, which can be easily anticipated. The *Vishnu Purana*, though it gives the usual genealogy of Krishna making him the son of a Kshatriya named Vasudeva, recognises that 'Vāsudeva' is not a mere patronymic of 'Vasudeva,' but bears a deeper meaning. In I. 2. 12 it says :—

सर्वत्रासी समस्तञ्च वसन्नेति वै यतः ।

ततः स वासूदेवेति विद्वद्भिः परिपठने ॥

That is, "As he exists in all, and as all things exist in him, so he is called Vāsudeva by the wise."

Now, in the first extract we have just made from Mr. Grierson's Encyclopædia article, he tells us that Krishna Vāsudeva was the pupil of Ghora Angirasa. The fact is that in the *Chhândogya* passage on which our author relies there is no mention either of Vasudeva or Vāsudeva. Krishna is mentioned there only as the 'son of Devakī'. And nothing is said there of Krishna being the founder of a religion. After giving an account of the Purusha Yajna, that is, a meditation on man in the analogy of a sacrifice, the *rishi* says :—

“Ghora, of the family of Angirasa, having communicated this to Krishna, son of Devakí, who, on hearing it, lost all thirst (i. e. desire for any other philosophy), said to him, ‘At the time of death one should take refuge in, that is, recite, these *mantras*,—Thou art imperishable, thou art unchangeable, thou art the subtle *prana*.’ ”

So, there is nothing in this passage to show or even to hint that Krishna, the son of Devakí, was anything but a disciple. In fact in the whole pre-Buddhist literature of India there is no mention, as we shall see by and by, of any religious reformer who founded such a thing as a Bhàgavata Dharma and was deified by his followers. When the *Mahābhārata*, in its present form, and even in some of its earlier forms, was written, Buddhism had arisen, stories narrating the previous incarnations of Buddha had been invented, the theory of divine incarnations had been conceived in imitation of those *jātaka* stories, thousands and tens of thousands had been converted from the Bráhmanical to the Buddhist creed, the need for a central figure in Bráhmanism like Buddha in the opposed camp had been felt,—a figure in which, like him, the royal and religious characters should coalesce. It is only when the *Mahābhārata* and the Puranas are studied in the light of these facts that the real meaning and character of their narrations and genealogies can be seen. We must therefore enter somewhat closely into an examination of these facts, and we proceed, in our hurried sketch, from the *Rigveda*, the oldest book not only in our, but the world’s, literature.

### III. The Vedic Vishnu and Krishna

The true nature of Puranic stories cannot be seen without a study of the *Rigveda*. Many of them have grown out of the poetic fancies of the Vedic *rishis*, and some are mythological developments of mere germs—perhaps originally historical, but not admitting of historical verification,—to be found in them. When Puranic stories are thus traced to their real origin, they lose the quasi-historical character in which they appear in the Puranas and cease to serve the purpose for which they were invented, namely fostering belief in the Puranic heroes set up as incarnations of God. It is therefore a distinct service to true religion to explain the real character of these stories by critical research. Tender minds, even among the liberal, shrink from the task and are apt to regard such criticism as mere reckless iconoclasm. But apart from other considerations, when elaborate systems of false religion, often immoral in their tendencies, are reared on the authority of “great men” supposed to have been sent by God, is it not a real service to the cause of truth to show that these so called great men never existed and never taught such harmful doctrines?

Vishnu, whose incarnations now claim the largest number of worshippers in this country, and who is taught in the Vaishnava Puranas as the Supreme Being, is only a minor god in the *Rigveda*. And who or what



is this Vishnu ? Whatever else he may be in the Puranas, in the *Rigveda* he is only another name for the sun. We meet him first in the 22nd *sukta* of the first *mandala*. He is "the allied friend of Indra"—'*Indrasya yuyjah sakhá*,'—an expression which his Puranic worshippers never liked and which led them to invent various stories, as we shall see by and by, about the mutual hostility of the two gods. However, the three *vikramas* or strides of Vishnu as *Vámana*, of which we hear so much in the Puranas, are, according to the ancient interpreters of the Vedas, only the three positions of the sun in the sky,—in the eastern horizon when he rises, in mid-heaven at noon and in the western horizon when he sets. '*Tad Vishnoh paramam padam*,'—the highest place of Vishnu—of which the Upanishads give a spiritual interpretation and which even the Bráhma Samáj of India, apparently misled by this interpretation, quotes as a theistic text in their *Sloka-Sangraha*, is in its original sense nothing but the second of the solar positions just mentioned. However, we meet with Vishnu again in *suktas* 99 and 100 of the seventh *mandala*, from which it is clear how he gradually came to be identified with the Supreme Being. In these *suktas*, however, in spite of the almost divine honour paid to him, he is still praised in association with Indra. But from the *Gáyatri* (I. 164, 46) and the *Hansavati Rik* (IV. 40. 5), if the latter really refers to the sun, it seems he had already become the chief object of worship to some of the Vedic *rishis*. However, a long time, in fact several centuries, elapsed before this

devotion to Vishnu grew into Vaishnavism as we now know it and as we find it in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Vaishnava Puranas*. It does not seem to have attained this growth before the doctrine of incarnation was formulated and before the chief incarnation of Vishnu, that is Krishna, was discovered. And as it was the *Rigveda* that furnished the god, so it was the same time-honoured scripture that supplied his chief incarnation too. Of the Rigvedic Krishnas, therefore, who were raised to this place of honour, we now proceed to speak.

There are at least two Krishnas in the *Rigveda*, the one an Aryan *rishi* and the other a non-Aryan warrior. We meet with the first in I. 116. 23 and then again in I. 117. 7, in both of which passages the poet, Kakshiván, speaks of Krishna and his son Visvakáya as worshippers of the twin-gods Asvins, who are said to have restored the latter's dead son Visvápu to the sorrowing father and grandfather. Krishna, when he re-appears in the *Puranas*, must needs remember this kind act done to him by the gods and imitate it in the case of his preceptor, Sandipani. Sandipani's son was lost in the sea at Prabhása. At the request of the preceptor, Krishna restored the boy to him, having gone all the way to the abode of Death and brought him from there. However, we meet with Krishna again, probably the same Krishna, in the 85th *sukta* of the 8th *mandala*, of which he is himself the *rishi* or composer and which is addressed to the same gods, the Asvins. The next *sukta* is ascribed to Krishna's son,

who is here called Visvaká instead of Visvakáya. That the two words are slight variations of the same name, appears from the fact that the *rishi* mentions his son Visvāpu here and prays for him to the gods. It must be noted that the *rishi* of this *sukta* is called an Angirasa, that is, belonging to the family of Angira. This Angirasa Krishna reappears in the *Chhândogya* Upanishad, as we have already seen, as the disciple of 'Ghora, of the family of Angira.' However, to go back to the *Rigveda*, X. 43 again is ascribed to Krishna and X. 42 and 43 to a *rishi* called Krishnákhyā, who may be the same as Krishna, as 'Krishnákhyā' means 'of the name of Krishna.' These *suktas* however, do not throw any additional light on the Krishna of the Puranas.

We meet with the non-Aryan Krishna in the 96th *sukta*, 8th *mandala*, of the *Rigveda*. Verses 13th-15th of this *sukta* describe a battle which Indra fought with this Krishna on the Ansumati river. It is said that Krishna had with him an army of ten thousand soldiers. That they were non-Aryans, appears from the adjective "godless"—'a-devih'—applied to them. Indra is said to have destroyed them with the help of Brihaspati, "for the good of mankind." All this probably refers to a real encounter of the ancient Indo-Aryans and the non-Aryans on the north-western frontier under their respective leaders. But the passage seems to have furnished the composers of the Puranas with materials for some imaginary feuds between Indra, as the chief god of the Vedic religion,

and Krishna as the god of a new creed which wanted to break with some of the traditions and practices of the old religion. In these feuds Krishna is invariably represented as the victorious party, in fact the Supreme Being himself, whom Indra could not possibly cope with. The most well-known of these feuds is the one that is said to have occurred at Brindabana, where the Gopas, who are described as pastoral nomads, were dissuaded by Krishna from worshipping Indra, who is described as the god of agriculturists, as the Aryans then were. The real god of those who lived on pasturage was, Krishna said, not the rain-giving Indra, but the cattle-feeding hill, Go-bardhana, which therefore the Gopas should worship. The sequel is well-known. Here the Puranic Krishna—in spite of the genealogy invented to set him up as an historical person—clearly discloses his character as the poetic copy of a non-Aryan original,—a copy made with the purpose of establishing a theory, for it is only under the influence of such a bias that an Aryan *rishi* or warrior, however revolutionary his views might be conceived to have been, could be described as preferring the fetishes of a nomadic tribe to the gods—specially the mightiest god—of his own people. But of the Puranic Krishna, more as we proceed.

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#### IV. The Yādava and Kaurava Genealogies

We shall now say something, in the light thrown upon them by the *Rigveda*, on the Yādava and Kaurava genealogies as they are given in the *Mahābhārata*. In the former frequent mention is made of 'Panchajanāh', 'the five tribes.' According to some scholars the expression means the Purus, Turvasas, Yadus, Anus and Druhyus, who are mentioned in various parts of the book. For instance, Professor A. A. Macdonell of Oxford, speaking in his *History of Sanskrit Literature* of the meaning of this expression, says: "It is not improbable that by this term were meant five tribes which are enumerated together in two passages, the Purus, Turvasas, Yadus, Anus and Druhyus." (P. 153.) We meet also in the same Veda with the Bhāratas, who are identified by the *Mahābhārata* with the Kurus and the Pāndus, specially the latter. As to the place of the former in the Brāhmanas, the same historian says: "The names of a number of the most important of the Rigvedic tribes, such as the Purus, Turvasas, Yadus, Tritsus, and others, have entirely or practically disappeared from the Brāhmanas." (P. 156). This seems to have encouraged the composers of the *Mahābhārata* to manipulate these names according to their tastes and purposes, for we find them weaving a genealogy out of them, one making Krishna a descendant of Yadu, and the Pandavas of Puru. According to this genealogy Yadu, Puru, Turvas (called Turvasu

in the *Mahābhārata*), Anu and Druhyu are all sons of a king named Yayāti by his two wives, Devayānī and Sarmishthā. Yayāti himself, with his father Nahusha, is mentioned in X.63.1 of the *Rigveda*. Now, some of the tribes out of whose names this genealogy is framed, seem to have been originally non-Aryans, but latterly Aryanised on their adoption of the Vedic religion. This appears from X.62.10 and IV. 30.17 of the same book. In the former of these passages Yadu and Turvas are clearly mentioned as 'Dāsas' and to have presented Manu with a large number of cows and entertained him with sweet words and a feast,—a very good reason, no doubt, for being promoted to Aryaship. In the latter passage we read that Indra made the unconsecrated Yadu and Turvas fit for consecration. Why should not they be consecrated when they had got a testimonial from such a high authority as Manu, and when they were already favourites of Indra, as appears from other passages in the same Veda, e.g. 1.54.6 and X.49.8 ? Now, the writer of the *Mahābhārata* story of Yayāti and his sons admits in a manner the non-Aryan or mixed character of his heroes. He makes both the wives of Yayāti daughters of Asuras,—Devayānī being, according to him, the daughter of Sukra, the priest of the Asuras, and Sarmisthā the daughter of Brishaparva, an Asura king. Of Yayāti's sons he says at the end of the eighty-fifth chapter of the *A'di Parva* that from Yadu were descended the Yādavas, from Turvasu the Yavanas, from Druhyu the Bhojas, from Anu the Mlechchhas, and from Puru,

who is said to have pleased his father by lending him his youth, came down the Pauravas, the ancestors of the Kurus. Dhritaráshtira and Pándu are made to descend from Puru at the end of a long line of progenitors, and Krishna from Yadu in the same manner.\* The formidable array of names, male and female, in both the genealogies, something which no real historian can boast of, is enough to show the purely imaginary character of these genealogies and can be taken as such—as a real enumeration of men and women—only by child-like intellects to which all stories are histories. The descent of the five Pándavas from five of the Vedic gods and of their common wife

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\* Puru had three sons by his wife Paushtí,—Pravíra, Ísvara and Raudrásva. Pravíra's wife was Surasení, who gave birth to Manasyu. Manasyu had three sons by his wife Sauvirí, the eldest of whom was named Anvakbhánu. Raudrásva had for his wife the nymph Misrakesí, who presented him with ten sons,—Richeyu, Riksheyu, Krikneyu, Sthandileyu, Vaneyu, Jaleyu, Tejeyu, Satyeyu, Dharmeyu and Sannateyu. Richeyu had a son named Matinar, who again had four sons, Tansu, Mahan, Atirath and Druhyu. Tansu's son was Ilin, who had by his wife Rathantarí five sons named Dushmanta, Sura, Bhima, Pravasú and Vasu. From Dushmanta came, by Sakuntala, Bharata, and from him Bhumanyu. Bhumanyu had, by his wife Pushkariní, six sons named Suhotra, Diviratha, Suhota, Suhavfh, Sujayu and Richika. But it is a far cry yet to the heroes of the *Mahábhárata*, and as the reader's patience is perhaps already taxed to the utmost, we stop here. This genealogy is to be found in the 94th chapter of the *A'di Parva*. We omit the Yádava genealogy altogether, as we know it will be read even with less patience on account of its long and monotonous array of names.

Draupadī from the sacrificial altar, shows that the poet who conceived this story did not care to disguise its fictitious character. The same thing may be said of the hundred sons of Dhritarāshtra, specially of the way in which they came to be a hundred. In fact the ancient name of the *Mahābhārata*—‘*Itihāsa*’ (history)—is a great misnomer, and it bespeaks the utter ignorance in which the masses of our country were kept for centuries, and the narrow character of the education which the majority even of the upper classes received, that this book was almost universally received as history by our people till about two generations back and is even now so accepted by the ignorant and the half-educated. It is so full of astounding things told about nature and man, that those whom even a modicum of liberal education has given an idea of the reign of law in the physical and moral world and of the nature of real history, can at once see that it is little better than a book of fables intended for the entertainment and instruction (not always of a healthy nature) of the ignorant masses. It is hardly credible that the really learned among the ancients regarded it as anything but a story-book. However, in the very beginning of the present age, Raja Rammohan Ray, after whom the age is justly called, drew the attention of his countrymen to the significance of one of the very opening verses of the epic, in which the poet says to all who have ears to hear that his work is a product of imagination and should not be taken as history. Vyāsa, said to be the original composer of the poem, says to



Ganesha, whom Brahmá recommended to him as his amanuensis :—

लेखको भारतस्यास्य भव त्वं गणनायक ।

मयेव प्रीच्यमानस्य मनसा कल्पितस्य च ॥

That is, "Be thou the writer, O Ganesha, of this *Bhārata*, which I am going to dictate to you and which I have imagined by my mind." However, the fictitious nature of the *Mahābhārata* story, specially of its central figure, Krishna, will be more and more evident as we proceed.

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## V. Vishnu and Krishna in later Literature .

I shall now speak of the gradual evolution of Vishnu and Krishna in our later ancient literature. Ancient India, it is well-known, has no history in the ordinary sense. The only history it has is its literature, and that is a history not of dates, but of periods, each comprising centuries, and fixed with varying degrees of probability. Narrations and genealogies, such as we find in the epics and the Puranas, cannot be accepted as historical, not simply because they are mixed up with absurd and miraculous stories, but because even when they make statements which are possibly true, they are not confirmed by the contemporary history of other nations. Indian history in the ordinary sense began from the rise of Buddhism, when we came into contact with other nations, and their records began to throw light on our social and political condition. The Greek invasion is another great landmark in our real history, when a really history-loving nation had the opportunity of studying our national life and commenting upon it. Making these our starting points, we may form a rough idea of the gradual evolution of our social and religious life from the study of our ancient literature. As to actual kings, their feuds and conquests, even of actual religious teachers,—with the single exception of Buddha, who, as we have already said, forms the very starting point of this history,—the doctrines taught and the changes

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brought about by them, we have no records whatever that can be relied on as history.

There is a general agreement among orientalists as to the periods of our ancient literature. The earlier limit, the beginning of the first or Mantra period, of the period when the Vedic hymns were composed and compiled, cannot indeed be fixed with any certainty or even probability. But that it cannot be later than B. C. 2000 seems to be generally agreed upon. The composition of the hymns and even the compilation of the *Riks* in the form of a *Samhitá* may be supposed to have ended by B. C. 1400 and the preparation of the *Sáman* and *Yajus Samhitás*, which means their separation from the earlier *Bráhmanas* or ceremonial manuals, to have taken about six centuries more. The first period, therefore, the period of the composition and compilation of the Vedic hymns in their three varieties of *Rik*, *Sáman* and *Yajus*,—metre, song and prose—with its two divisions just indicated, is supposed to have extended from B. C. 2000 to B. C. 1000. The earlier *Bráhmanas*, with the *Upanishads* contained in them,—for instance the *Satapatha Bráhmaṇa* containing the *Bṛihadárányaka Upanishad*,—belong to this period. The second period, that of the composition of the later *Bráhmanas* and the rest of the principal *Upanishads*—extends from B. C. 1000 to B. C. 500. The third or Sūtra Period, that in which the aphoristic works in exposition of the Vedas, including Panini's *Grammar*, the metrical *Upanishads*, the Buddhistic *Suttas* and the chief systems of philosophical aphorisms

were composed, is supposed to have extended from B. C. 500 to B. C. 200. The fourth period, called the Dharma Sástra Period, extending from B. C. 200 to A. D. 500, is the one in which such metrical law-books as those ascribed to Manu, Yájnavalkya and Nárada were composed. To this period is also assigned the sectarian Upanishads, for instance the *Ráma Tápaniya*, *Gopála Tápaniya* and *Nrisimha Tápaniya*, in which particular individuals, historical or mythical, are represented as incarnations of the Supreme Being. The next period, from A. D. 500 to about A. D. 1000, is called the Puranic Period, the period in which the Puranas in their present forms, originally based perhaps on the '*Itihása-Purána*' mentioned in the *Bráhmanas*, were composed and the sectarian religions first taught in the so-called *Ātharvan Upanishads* were developed.

Now, we have seen the germs of Vishnu worship and the germs also of the later Krishna legend in the *Rigveda*. The *Sāmaveda* being little more than a collection of *Riks* set to music, it is of no historical importance. In the *Bráhmanas* contemporaneous with the two *Yajurveda Samhitás* we find Vishnu in a much more developed form than in the *Rigveda*. He has become to some the chief of the gods, and to the imagination of the priestly composers of these works he is identified with the Vedic ceremonial—'*Yajno vai Vishnuh.*' But there is nothing in this period like the veneration felt for him in the epic and Puranic literature. On the contrary he is sometimes rather roughly handled and his elevation to the chief place

among the gods resented in an irreverent manner. For instance, the following story taken from the *Satapatha Bráhmāna*\* (XIV. 1. 1.), but found also in some other *Bráhmanas*, will suffice to prove our statement :—

“The gods Agni, Indra, Soma, Makha, Vishnu, and and the Visve Devah, except the two Asvins, performed a sacrificial session. Their place of divine worship was Kurukshetra.....They entered upon the session thinking, ‘May we attain excellence ! May we become glorious ! May we become eaters of food !’.....They spake, ‘Whoever of us, through austerity, fervour, faith, sacrifice, and oblations, shall first compass the end of the sacrifice, he shall be the most excellent of us, and shall then be in common to us all.’ ‘So be it,’ they said. Vishnu first attained it, and he became the most excellent of the gods ; whence people say, ‘Vishnu is the most excellent of the gods.’.....But, indeed, Vishnu was unable to control that (love of) glory of his.....Taking his bow, together with three arrows, he stepped forth. He stood, resting his head on the end of the bow. Not daring to attack him, the gods sat themselves down all around him. Then the ants said—these ants (*vamri*), doubtless, were that (kind called) ‘*upadika*’—‘What would ye give to him who should gnaw the bowstring ?’—‘We would give him the (constant) enjoyment of food, and he would find water even in the desert : so we would give him every enjoyment of food.’—‘So be it,’ they said. Having

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\* Eggeling’s translation in the ‘Sacred Books of the East.’

gone nigh unto him, they gnawed his bowstring. When it was cut, the ends of the bow, springing asunder, cut off Vishnu's head. It fell with (the sound) 'ghrin;' and on falling it became yonder sun. And the rest (of the body) lay stretched out (with the top part) towards the east...The gods spake, 'Verily, our great hero (*mahán vírah*) has fallen.'...The gods rushed forward to him, even as those eager to secure some gain (will do). Indra reached him first. He applied himself to him, and encompassed him, and in encompassing him, he became (possessed of) that glory of his."

As I have already said in speaking of the Rigvedic Vishnu and Krishna, the writers of the Vaishnava Puranas took ample revenge on the writers of such anti-Vishnuite Vedic stories and avenged their god by numerous stories of feuds between Indra and Krishna in which the former was invariably worsted and humbled. Unlike the followers of the Puranas ignorant of Vedic literature, to whom Vishnu is the God of gods and has always been so, the writers of the Puranas, who may be supposed to have been well-read in the Vedas, bore a grudge to Indra and felt that they could not instal Vishnu or his incarnation Krishna on the hearts of their followers without first humbling that god. However, coming to the Upanishads, we find, in some of the earliest of them, Vishnu identified in a manner with Brahman, while in others it is Indra, Váyu or Rudra who gets the honour. In *Chhándogya*, (I. 6. 6-8) and in *Íśá* 16 the divine person supposed to

occupy the solar disc is described as a glorious form of the Supreme Being. In the beginning of the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, Váyu, the wind-god, is said to be the sensuous (*pratyaksham*) manifestation of Brahman while in the *Kaushítaki* it is Indra who identifies himself with the Absolute in the spirit of the Upanishadic philosophy. In the *Svetásvatara*, much later than the *Upanishads* already mentioned, but still one of the chief twelve, Brahman is addressed and spoken of under the sectarian names of Hara and Rudra. But the *Upanishads* are uncontroversial and do not quarrel with one another like the Puranas. Their chief concern is with Brahman, not with the relative excellence of the gods. And the gods they incidentally extol wear in them their Vedic unincarnate form. The doctrine of special incarnation, which, not contented with God's manifestation in the human soul and in the powers of nature, makes him live and move with men as one of themselves, is yet absent. It appears first in the sectarian *Upanishads* and is elaborated in the epics and the Puranas.

The Kurus and the Páñchálas, who are practically unknown in the *Rigveda*, are frequently mentioned in the *Bráhmaṇas*, and even the names of some of the heroes of the *Mahábhárata*, for instance 'Dhritaráshtṛa, the son of Vichitravírya' (*Káthaka*, X. 6) and 'Janmejaya, the son of Parikshita' (*Satapatha*, IV. & V) are found in them. 'Krishna, the son of Devaki' is mentioned, as we have already seen, in the *Chhándogya*. Of the passage in the *Káthaka*.

already referred to, Professor Eggeling says in a footnote of his translation of the *Satapatha*, "From this passage—which unfortunately is not in a very good condition in the Berlin MS.—it would appear that animosities had then existed between the Kurus and Páñchálas." Besides this slight indication of a feud between these two peoples, there is not in the whole range of *Bráhmaṇa* and *Upanishad* literature anything to show that a war of such magnitude as the *Mahābhārata* describes took place in this period. If any such thing had happened in this period—the period of the compilation of the Vedic hymns, with which the battle is connected, for Vedavyása, the chief of the compilers, is said to be its first poet—it would probably have had a place in this literature. Nor is there any mention in it of the existence of such a great epic as the *Mahābhārata*. It is not impossible indeed that the 'Itihása-Purána' mentioned here and there in some *Brahmanas* contained descriptions of local and tribal feuds not important enough to find any place in such serious literature. However, coming to the next period and its literature, the *Sútra*, we find Panini taking cognizance only of the early *Bráhmaṇas*,—even the *Áranyakas*, not to speak of later literature, being unknown to him. A great epic narrating a great war was not likely to escape his notice if it then existed. In the Buddhist *Suttas*, which belong to this period, Krishna, the central figure of the *Mahābhārata*, the God incarnate whose worship the whole epic is intended to teach, is



still mentioned as an Asura, proving that he had not yet been recognised as a god and that no great work, if any at all, had then been written to celebrate his doings. We have therefore to come down, in our search after the *Mahābhārata* and its god, to the fourth period of our ancient literature, the Dharmaśāstra Period, which, as we have seen, extends from B. C. 200 to A. D. 500, and here our search is rewarded with success. A great authority of this period is Patanjali, author of the *Yoga Sūtras* and of the *Mahābhāshya*, the celebrated commentary on Panini's *Grammar*. It has been ascertained with great probability that he lived during the reign of Pushyamitra, who flourished from B. C. 178 to 142. In his great commentary he makes mention of events, for instance, the killing of Kamsa by Krishna, and quotes passages, which must have had a place in some literary work depicting the doings of Krishna and the Pāndavas. We may therefore conclude that the *Mahābhārata*, in at least its first form as an epic, existed in his time. However, we must look into the proof of this statement more closely.

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## The Mahābhārata and its Krishna

The *Mahābhārata* has grown through ages and is the product of many writers. Of this the book itself affords clear evidence inspite of the blind faith of the ignorant masses that it was composed by a single writer, Vedavyāsa, the compiler of the Vedas. In the first chapter of the book it is said that Vedayāsa originally composed it under the name of *Bhārata-samhitā* and that in that form it contained only the main story of the Kuru-Pāṇchāla war and did not include the episodes. The number of verses in this form of the book is said to have been only twenty-four thousand. Vyāsa is then said to have added to the original poem, so that it grew into sixty lakhs of verses of which only one lakh exist on the earth. Leaving aside the statement about the remaining fifty lakhs as pure myth, we may say that even the one lakh did not come into existence as quickly as the above statement indicates. For in the very next chapter of the book, called the *Parva-sangraha*, the enumeration of chapters, the number of verses in the book is given as 84,836. The statement in the first chapter, then, of the poem containing a lakh of verses must have been added long after the actual enumeration of verses in the second chapter, when the bulk of the book had gone beyond the number given in the latter. The present form of the book, including its supplementary portion called the *Harivamsa*, contains 107,390 verses. There is a

reference in the second chapter to the supplementary parts of the book, which therefore must also have been introduced after the book had taken its present form. The book is full of such additions and interpolations, which amply proves the multiplicity of hands which have contributed to its production. However, in the light of these statements in the poem itself we find in it four distinct strata,—the first containing 24,000 verses, the second 84,836, the third 100,000, and the fourth 107,390. But, as we have already seen, there was a time when there were only the materials of an epic in the form of heroic lays or stories called “Itihāsa-Purana,” but no epic in the proper sense. These lays or stories may be regarded as really the first stratum of the *Mahābhārata*. Mention is made in the completed book of 8,800 verses called *Vyāsa-kṛtas*, which are most obscure in their meaning. These are supposed by some scholars to represent the first form of the book,—the original heroic lays from which it has grown. The shadowy character of the epic’s relation to Vedavyāsa may be seen from the following statements in the poem itself. Vedavyāsa, having composed the poem, taught it to his own son Suka and to Sumantu, Jaimini, Paila and Vaisampāyana, each of whom published a distinct *Samhitā* of what he had learnt. Vaisampāyana recited his version of the poem at the Sarpayajna (Snake-sacrifice) of Janmejaya, Arjuna’s great-grandson. One of the hearers of this recitation was Ugrasravā, the great Pauranika or story-teller. Ugrasravā, having once visited the Naimisha forest, where a number of

*rishis* were offering a great sacrifice, was requested by them to recite what he had heard from Vaisampáyana at the Snake-sacrifice. He did so. He is represented as the speaker in the poem up to where he introduces Vaisampáyana. But who is the person, or who are those that speak of Ugrasravá, Vaisampáyana and Vyása? They, and not these three, are the real authors of the *Mahābhārata*, and no one can say who they are. 4081

However, to proceed in our journey in search of the original *Mahābhārata*,—as Pantanjali seems to have been familiar with some form of the poem in the second century B. C., it may have existed for about a hundred years or more before him, and its mention in the *Aśvalayana Grihya Sūtras* belonging to the middle of the Sūtra Period, may not possibly be an interpolation, as it is suspected to be. But the epic in its present form, nay even in one of its earlier forms—containing the description of a great war in which the Yavanas, that is the Ionians or Greeks, helped, and princes from all parts of the country took part, and of an empire extending to the farthest limits of the country,—cannot have been written before the Greek invasion or even before the great empire of Asoka had arisen and given our poets the idea of what an empire really is. Our ancient writers, even up to Manu in the fourth period of our literature, have no idea of such an empire, and, as I have already said, of a great war of the magnitude described in the book. If Yudhisthira had reigned, fought and conquered in pre-Buddhistic times, as he is

said in the poem to have done, ancient literature would have been full of his doings instead of being entirely silent about him, as it actually is. The same thing is true of Krishna and of his sayings and doings as they are represented in the *Mahābhārata*. Such a great hero and religious teacher, if he had actually lived in ancient times, as he is said to have done in the poem, could not have escaped notice in the sacred literature of his time. The *Mahābhārata*, therefore, in its full epic form, belongs to a time not only after Buddha and the Greek invasion, but after Asoka. As we have already said, it refers to Buddhist monuments as having ousted the temples of the gods. As to the war it describes, it must be a magnified poetic picture of some tribal feud such as is mentioned in the *Kāthaka*. For aught we know, Sudas's war with the ten kings mentioned in the *Rigveda* (VII. 18,33 & 83), may have furnished the authors with the idea of a great war in ancient times, and they may have painted it in the brilliant colours derived from the great wars that took place in the times nearer that in which they lived.

As to Krishna, his relation with the main story of the *Mahābhārata* is slight, and in the original narration of the war he may have been quite absent. Even when introduced into the poem, he was at first perhaps only a hero and politician, and not God incarnate. As we have already seen, the idea of God taking human form and living among men came very late in our literature. It came only in the Dharmaśāstra period, and even the

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earlier Dharmasāstras, such as that of Manu, which is largely quoted in the *Mahābhārata*, are without this idea. The *Bhagavadgītā* and the other *Gītās* and religious dissertations in the *Mahābhārata* in which Krishna appears prominently as a religious teacher and God incarnate, are evidently very late additions to the original epic. This is clear from the abrupt way in which some of them, specially the *Bhagavadgītā*, are introduced into the body of the poem, like patches of new cloth sewn with an old piece, and from the knowledge of later times, manners and religious doctrines which they betray. But there are indications, however slight, to show that the worship of Krishna as a hero or demi-god existed in the country as early as 300 B. C. In the account which Megasthenes, who was the Greek ambassador at the court of Chandragupta, has left of India, he says that in his time Heracles was worshipped at Methora and Kleisobora,—words which most scholars interpret as meaning that Krishna as a hero like the Greek Heracles was worshipped at Mathura and Krishnapura. Now, who was this Krishna, if not the Greek Heracles himself, whom our people may have recognised as a god on account of their close contact with the Greeks? Borrowing gods from other peoples is a common practice with nations, and we have done so in all periods of our history. But supposing that this 'Heracles' was an indigenous god, where could he come from? Two theories may be proposed about the matter. Either he was some non-Aryan hero, say, the non-Aryan Krishna of the *Rigveda*, who may have

long been honoured by his race but not until that time recognised by the Aryans. The recognition may have come about the time we are speaking of,—perhaps with the aryanisation of the tribe whose god or hero he was. Or he was the product of mere poetic imagination, which had taken its hint from the two Krishnas mentioned in the *Rigveda*, the one a composer of Vedic *suktas* and the other a warrior. In the Mahábháratia Krishna both the religious and warlike characters are combined. To us the latter theory seems more probable. Even a non-Aryan god or hero, worshipped by large classes of people, specially one bearing a name mentioned in the *Rigveda*, was not likely to escape notice by our ancient writers. On the other hand, there are numerous shrines in India, perhaps in other countries also, which owe their gods only to imagination. What are Benares, Gaya, Puri and Kamrup—to name only a few—but such shrines—shrines not sacred to any actual heroes or heroines? Mathura, Brindaban and Dwaraka may be such shrines and nothing more. In the present case, the temptation to inventing a god, or if the other theory is accepted, to developing and popularising a god already receiving worship from some people, was very great. The secret of the spread of Buddhism must soon have been found out by the Bráhmanas. It was the position of Buddha as the central figure in his religion. The sástras appeal only to the learned few; a person—one realising to some extent at least the popular ideals of excellence—appeals to all. Before the rise or popularisation of Krishna-

worship the rapid progress of Buddhism must have deeply alarmed the leaders of Vedic society and set them thinking of the best way to stem the tide. Besides the other methods adopted, of which we need not speak, the setting up of a rival to Buddha must have commended itself as the most important. The Buddhist *Jataka* stories,—stories of the numerous previous incarnations of Buddha—must have suggested the incarnations of the most benign and popular of the Vedic gods—Vishnu. And as Buddha was by birth a Kshatriya and by character a religious teacher, so was his rival, Krishna, conceived to be, though perhaps the warlike predilections of the epic poets made him more of a warrior than became his mission as a religious teacher. This seems to us to be the origin of the so-called Bhágavata Dharma, which was indebted not only for many of its teachings, but also for the conception of its central figure, to Buddhism. Krishna Vāsudeva was not its author, but its product. Its authors were that long line of thinkers who tried to grapple with the problems that had arisen in Vedic society from the rise and spread of Buddhism in the country. The old religion of sacrifices to the gods had failed. The religion of the Upanishads was unsuited to the masses. Even among the learned, whom it might suit, one interpretation of it had led to Nihilism. Buddhism itself, at any rate in its Hináyana form, seemed a logical outcome of this mode of interpretation. How was then Vedic theism to be conserved? On what line should it develop? How were the



broken forces of Bráhmaism to be rallied ? The Bhágavata Dharma, or, to call it by its more correct name, Vaishnavism, was an answer to these questions. The answer was given in various forms in the *Mahá-bhárata* and the Puranas, though all had one common central character. It was given mostly in the name of one fancied teacher, that of Krishna Vásudeva. The earlier Vaishnavas knew he was not historical. To them as well as to the wisest of their later followers, he was only the indwelling Logos, the Supreme Reason incarnate in man. Whatever therefore seemed true and beautiful to them—even what they considered expedient for the conservation of religion—they ascribed to Krishna. Here, therefore, we take leave of Krishna as the supposed founder of Bhágavatism. In our subsequent essays on the subject we shall deal with the philosophy, doctrines and practical *sádhana*s of Vaishnavism as they developed at the hands of its many teachers from the time of the *Mahábhárata* to quite recent times.

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## VII. The Vishnu of the Puranas

The Vishnu of the Puranas is the universe conceived as a person. This conception is purely Upanishadic. The idea of creation given in the *Chhândogya* and other Upanishads is that the Divine Being manifested himself in the form of the world both in its organic and inorganic aspects. The idea is indeed found in imperfect forms in the *Rigveda*, but it is in the Upanishads that it has taken a definite shape. What unreflective people conceive as dead matter, is, in the enlightened vision of the Upanishadic seers, nothing but a form in which the Supreme Consciousness itself appears to us. This Idealistic view is found throughout the higher Puranas inspite of the crudities and extravagant fancies which abound in them. When the philosophic vision takes the form of poetry, it describes the world as an embodied person with its various parts as his limbs and organs. The Puranas revel in such descriptions, but the original from which they copy is the following stanza in the *Mundaka Upanishad* :

अग्निर्मुहूर्तं चक्षुषी चन्द्रसूर्यौ दिशः श्रोत्रे वाग्वक्त्राश्च वेदाः ।

वायुः प्राणो हृदयं विश्वमस्य पद्भ्यां पृथिवी शेषः सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा ॥

That is, "Heaven is his head, the sun and the moon are his eyes, the directions are his ears, the Vedas as uttered are his speech, air is his breath, the world is his heart, the earth has come out of his feet ; he is the inner Self of all creatures." (II. 1. 4.) The *Visvarupa* or

cosmic form of the Supreme Being seen by Arjuna and described in the *Bhagavadgītā* is only an amplification of this passage. The Puranas are full of such amplifications, but they go a step further than the *Gītā* and represent what is only a figure of speech as a person in flesh and blood moving about and conversing with his creatures. The ignorant and thoughtless reader of the Puranas does not see that their authors are indulging in poetic fancy and takes them as stating facts—such facts as he can apprehend, namely, visible and tangible facts. He has neither the philosophical nor the literary training to grasp the writer's meaning. This is true not only of the great mass of those who only hear the Puranas read and expounded, but perhaps of a large fraction of their students. But the writers of the Puranas can hardly be blamed for this. They make no secret of the fact that the representation of Vishnu as an embodied person with limbs and organs like those of a man is purely metaphorical. The popular idea of Vishnu is that he is a person with four arms holding a conch, a quoit, a club and a lotus in them. His head is adorned with a crown and his ears with ear-rings. A garland of wild flowers encircles his neck, and a gem called *Kaustubha* is suspended on his breast, which is also adorned with a circle of hairs growing thereon and called *Srivatsa*. He wears a bright yellow garment. Sri or Lashmī, his wife, rests on his bosom. The ignorant Vaishnava sets up this figure in stone or metal and worships it with various material offerings, believing it to be a true representation of his deity.

But what do his scriptures say ? Let us first hear the .  
*Vishnu Purana*, In Chap. XXII, Pt. I, Parásara says  
to Maitreya :—

नमस्कृत्वाप्रवेयाय विष्णवे प्रभविष्णवे ।  
कथयामि यथाख्यातं वसिष्ठेन ममाभवत् ॥  
आत्मानमस्य जगतीं निष्ठेपमगुणामलम् ।  
विभर्ति कौस्तुभमणिस्वरूपं भगवान् हरिः ॥  
श्रोतृसंस्थानधरमनस्ते च समाश्रितम् ।  
प्रधानं बुद्धिरप्यास्ते गदारूपेण माधवे ॥  
भूतादिमिन्द्रियादिषु द्विधाहङ्कारमीश्वरः ।  
विभर्ति शङ्करूपेण शार्ङ्गरूपेण च स्थितम् ॥  
बलस्वरूपमत्यन्तजवेनान्तरितानिलम् ।  
चक्रस्वरूपञ्च मनो धत्ते विष्णुः करे स्थितम् ॥  
पञ्चरूपा तु या माला वैजयन्ती गदाभूतः ।  
सा भूतहेतुसंचाता भूतमाला च वै द्विज ॥

That is, "I bow down to the infinite and all-pervading Being who is the source of all things and proceed to say what was spoken to me by Vasistha. The Lord Hari holds the transcendent formless and pure Self of this universe as the *Kaustubha* gem. *Pradhána* (the seed of the material world according to the Sankhya philosophy) appears in Mádhava (that is Vishnu) as the circle of hairs called *srivatsa*, and *buddhi* (the first manifestation of *Pradhána*) as his club. God holds the elements, the senses and the two kinds of *ahankára* (egoity *rájasika* and *támasika*) as his conch and bow. Vishnu holds as his quoit *manas* (the sensorium) which represents power and is quicker than air. The

five-coloured garland named *vaijayanti* worn by the club-bearer represents, O twice-born one, the five subtle essences."

The writers of the Puranas are deeply influenced by the Sankhya philosophy and whenever they speak of the parts and aspects of the world, they invariably do so in terms used in that philosophy. Kapila, or whoever else may have been the founder of the philosophy, seems to have fixed once for all the form in which the universe was to be conceived by those who came after him. The Sankhya of these later writers is not indeed pure Sankhya. It is largely intermixed with Vedantic ideas. It would however be hardly too much to say that all later Hindu Metaphysics is a mixture—an attempted harmony—of the Sankhya and Vedanta philosophies. So we may as well give in a few words the Sankhya scheme of the world. The world as it presents itself to our senses is purely phenomenal. It has not the simplicity or the permanence which unreflective people ascribe to it. It is the product of two noumenal factors both of which are hidden from our view, but are inferred from their phenomenal effects. They are *Prakriti* or *Pradhána* on the one side and *Purusha* on the other. *Prakriti* is unconscious but active. *Purusha* is conscious but inactive. When they come together, the first product of their contact is *Mahat* or *Buddhi*, undifferentiated consciousness. *Mahat* differentiates itself into *Ahankára* or egoity on the one hand and *Panchatanmátrá*, the subtle essences of the five material elements, on the

other. *Ahankāra* again differentiates itself into the five organs of knowledge and *manas* or the sensorium as their support or unity and the five organs of action—speech, the hands and feet, and the organs of excretion and generation. The five subtle essences develop into the five gross elements which meet our senses. All things in heaven and earth are reduced by the Sankhya philosophers to these *Panchavimsati tattvas* or twenty-five categories. It is perhaps the simplicity of the scheme more than its depth or accuracy which commended itself to later philosophers and made them disinclined to taking any further trouble in classifying the objects of the world. However, we hope the short statement we have given of the Sankhya philosophy will help the reader to understand the extract from the *Vishnu* we have already given and the following from the *Bhāgavata*, which deals with the same subject that we have already spoken of, namely, the real meaning of the figure of Vishnu which receives popular worship. In the 11th chapter, 12th canto, of the Purana Saunaka says to Ugrasravas. :—

अथेममर्थं पृच्छामी भवन्तं बहुवित्तमम् ।

समस्ततन्त्राज्ञान्ते भवान् भागवत तत्त्ववित् ॥

तान्त्रिकाः परिचर्यायां केवलस्य त्रियःपतेः ।

अङ्गीपाङ्गायुधाकल्पं कल्पयन्ति यथा च येः ॥

तद्गो वर्णय भद्रं ते क्रियायोगं बुभुत्सताम् ॥

That is, "You are pious, the chief among the wise and know the secrets of all Tantras. So I ask you a question. The Lord of Śrī (glory) is pure consciousness,

but in the act of worship the Tantrikas imagine him as having organs, conveyances and weapons. We wish to know all about religious practices. Please tell us how and with reference to what *tattvas* they conceive him in this manner." Ugrasravá replied as follows :—

नमस्कृत्य गुरुन् वक्ष्ये विमूर्तो वैष्णवोरपि ।  
 याः प्रोक्ता वेदतन्त्राभ्यामाचार्यैः पद्मजादिभिः ॥  
 मायादीर्णवतिस्तत्त्वैः सविकारमयो विराट् ।  
 निश्चिंती दृष्टाने यत्र सचित्के भुवनत्रयम् ॥  
 एतद्दे पौरुषं रूपं भूः प्रादौ द्यौः शिरोनभः ।  
 नाभिः सूर्योऽक्षिणी नासे वायुःकर्णौ दिशः प्रभोः ॥  
 प्रजापतिः प्रजननमपानो मूल्युरौघिषुः ।  
 तद्वाहवो लोकपाला मनश्चन्द्रो भुवौ यमः ॥  
 लज्जोत्तरोऽधरो लोभो दन्ता ज्योत्स्नास्त्रयो भ्रमः ।  
 रोमाणि भूरुद्धा भूजो मेघाः पुरुषसूर्जजाः ॥  
 यावानथं वै पुरुषो यावत्था संख्यया मितः ।  
 तावानसावपि महापुरुषो लोकसंख्यया ॥  
 कौस्तुभव्यपदेशेन स्वात्मज्योतिर्विभर्तृजः ।  
 तत्प्रभा व्यापिनो गच्छाच्छ्रौवत्समुरगा विभुः ॥  
 स्वभायां वनमालाख्यां नानागुणमयीं दधत् ।  
 वासश्चन्दोमणं पीतं ब्रह्मसूत्रं त्रिवृत्स्वरम् ॥  
 विभर्ति साङ्ख्यं योगश्च देवो मकरकुण्डलि ।  
 सौख्यं पादं पारमेष्ठ्यं उर्वलोकाभयङ्करम् ॥  
 अव्याकृतमनस्ताव्यमासनं यदधिष्ठितः ।  
 धर्मशानादिभिर्युक्तं सत्त्वं पद्ममिहोच्यते ॥  
 श्रीजः सहोवलयुक्तं सुख्यतत्त्वं गदां दधत् ।  
 अर्पां तत्त्वं दरवरं तेजस्तत्त्वं सुदर्शनम् ॥

That is "Bowling down to my teachers, I proceed to speak of the manifestations of Vishnu as they have been spoken of in the Vedas and the Tantras by great teachers like Brahman (the 'lotus-born') and others. The phenomenal *virát* (cosmic body), in which conscious body the three worlds appear, is composed of nine categories (*tattvas*) beginning with *Máyá*. This is the form of the Divine Person. The earth is the Lord's feet, heaven his head, the sky his navel, the sun his eyes, air his nostrils, and the directions his ears. Prajapati is God's organ of generation and death his organ of excretion. The presiding deities of the world are his arms, the moon is his sensorium and Yama his eye-brows. Modesty and desire are his upper and lower lip, moonlight is his teeth, and illusion his smile. Trees are his hairs and clouds the locks of his head. As is this human person, proportioned according to his limbs, so is this Divine Person, proportioned according to the worlds comprised in him. The unborn all-pervading One holds in his breast the light of his own Self as the *Kaustubha* gem and the spreading rays of that light as the visible *srivatsa*. He wears his own *Máyá* consisting of various *gūnas* (qualities) as a garland of wild flowers, the Vedas as a yellow garment, and the tri-syllabic *Om* as the sacrificial thread. The Deity puts on the Sankhya and the Yoga doctrines as his ear-rings and over-lordship, which removes the fears of all, as his crown. The seat, called the 'infinite,' 'the undeveloped' (*Pradhána*) on which he is seated, is the *sattva gūna* composed of virtue,



wisdom and such other qualities, and is known in the world as *padma* ( lotus ). He holds as his club the chief category ( *prāna* ) which is composed of physical and mental strength, the category of *āp* ( water ) as his conch, and that of *tejas* ( fire ) as his quoit named 'Sudarsana' \* The metaphorical exposition goes on, interpreting many other things relating to Vishnu in the above manner, for instance his wife *Sri* as only the inexhaustible glory of the Self and his bearer Garuda as nothing but the Vedas. But what we have extracted is enough for our present purpose.

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### VIII. The Puranic Triad or Trinity

The Puranic conception of Vishnu given in the preceding essay is really the Vedic conception of Brahmá, Apra Brahman, Hiranyagarbha or Prajapati. Brahman as the Supreme Cause is Para-Brahman. Brahman as the first effect is the Kárya-Brahman under the various names just mentioned. It was Brahmá and not Vishnu or Siva who originally enjoyed the honour of being the first emanation from the Supreme Being. As the *Mundaka Upanishad* says,

ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः सन्मन्त्र

विश्वस्य कर्त्ता भूतस्य गोप्ता ।

That is, "Brahmá came out as the first among the devas. He is the maker of all and the protector of the world." This view, it seems, continued up to the early Buddhist times, as appears evident from Pali literature. Then came by and by the turn of Vishnu and Siva, who, as we have seen, had been minor gods in the *Rig-veda*, but slowly rose into prominence. But though Vishnu usurped Brahmá's place, his worshippers were not quite satisfied even by giving him this eminent place. They wanted him to be the Supreme Being himself, and so we find the Vaishnava Puranas alternating between the representation of him sometimes as the Supreme Cause and sometimes as the first emanation—between conceiving him as either *Nirguna* or

*Saguna* Brahman. The same is true of Siva and his worshippers. However, the conflicting claims of the three gods, Brahmá, Vishnu and Siva, to be the Supreme Cause or effect were in a manner settled by the conception of the *Trimurti*—the Hindu Triad or Trinity. We say 'in a manner,' for the worshippers of Brahmá and Siva are by no means satisfied with the position which their gods receive in the conception, each sect really claiming the highest position for the object of its worship. Let us however examine the nature and value of the conception. It is based on the Sankhya doctrine of the three *gunas* or primary qualities of nature. These qualities are *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas*. The first is the principle of luminosity or transparency. Its expressions are knowledge, peace, joy and beneficence. The second is the principle of attachment and expresses itself in insatiable desire and incessant activity. The third is the principle of darkness and manifests itself in the form of ignorance, inertia and the utter cessation of activity. All things in the world, material and immaterial, are said to be mixtures of the three *gunas* or qualities in various proportions. Ordinarily it is the predominance of a particular quality in an object over the other qualities that makes us characterise it as either *sattvika*, *rajasika*, or *tamasika*. Creation, the actual production of things, is ascribed to *rajas*, their preservation or persistence to *sattvam* and their destruction or dissolution to *tamas*. Brahmá represents *rajas*. Vishnu *sattvam* and Siva *tamas*. The first is Creator, the second Preserver and the third

Destroyer. That the three processes of creation, preservation and destruction are really three stages or aspects of the same fact and that the distinction is more conventional than real, seems to have been more or less clearly seen by those who first conceived the *Trimurti*. It is said ever and anon in the Puranas that it is the same person that is Brahmá and also Vishnu and Siva. But they cannot always keep up this rational and liberal position. They often descend to a much lower one, namely the sectarian view that the *Trimurti* consists of three different divine beings with varying characters, often mutually conflicting. The Vaishnava Puranas hold up Vishnu as decidedly higher than Brahmá and Siva, and sometimes paint the two latter in very dark colours, ascribing to them feelings and actions of which an ordinary mortal would be ashamed. They are not satisfied with the role of a mere preserver allotted to their god, but represent him as the Supreme Cause or first effect from it. This inconsistency they try to hide by conceiving two Vishnus, the one called Mahá-Vishnu and identified with the Supreme Creator or first Emanation and the other called simply Vishnu or Upendra with the subordinate function of a preserver. A similar device is employed in later Puranas like the *Brahma-vaivarta* as regards Krishna,—the heroic Krishna of the *Mahábhārata* being given a lower position and Krishna, the son of Yasodá and the friend of the Brindabana cowherds and cowherdesses, the higher. Such devices succeed only with those who do not know the historical evolution of Vishnu and Krishna as briefly traced in

our earlier essays, and to whom the Puranas are the only authority in such matters.

However, the real source of the doctrine of the three *gunas* and even that of three divine persons as their embodiments, seems to be the description of creation in the sixth chapter of the *Chhândogya* Upanishad. There A'runi teaches his son Svetaketu that the one only Supreme Being, wishing to multiply himself and manifest himself in the form of creatures, first became *Tejas*, the impersonation of fire. *Tejas* became *Ap*, the impersonation of water, which again became *Annam*, food or solid matter conceived as a person. These three primeval elements then became mixed up and evolved into the various objects of Nature. There are no simple elements now, all things being combinations of the original three. What we now call fire, water and solid matter, present only a predominantly large proportion of *tejas*, *ap* and *annam* respectively. All are ultimately conscious, being mere forms of the Supreme Consciousness. This is a form of Idealistic Monism, but the Sankhya is professedly dualistic and conceives subject and object as mutually independent. But that nothing could be made out of such independence and that it could not be made to explain a world presenting in all its aspects an apparently indissoluble union of subjective and objective elements, was evidently seen by the Sankhya philosophers, and thus it was conceived that Prakriti, the objective principle, could not act without coming into relation with Purusha, the subjective principle, and that Purusha, though conscious in

himself, owed all the richness of his knowledge to his relation with Prakriti. The writers of the Puranas saw both the strength and the weakness of the Sankhya Philosophy and tried with more or less success to effect a harmony between it and the Vedanta, to which they naturally owed allegiance. However, the principles of luminosity, activity and inertia are evidently there in the Upanishadic conception of *tejas*, *ap* and *annam*, all arising from the *ikshanam* or thought of the Supreme Purusha, and the first Sankhya philosophers seem evidently to have got their clue from this conception of our earliest seers or philosophers. The Puranic descriptions of creation are all mere fanciful paraphrases of this Upanishadic conception. This conception itself is poetic, as all conceptions must be which are not based on scientific observation and philosophical analysis. There was no science in those days and whatever philosophy there was, lacked method and precision. The "One only without a second" could not manifest himself as many without having the many as a moment or aspect of his nature. The One indeed is inconceivable, in fact an abstraction, apart from the many, as the many again are an abstraction apart from the One. As the Rishis themselves vaguely think, the many were already in the *ikshanam* or thought of the One, and could not be created by him in the ordinary sense of production or evolution. They were, as they now are, a part or aspect of his complex nature. Philosophy has to show the eternal and necessary elements or characteristics in the nature of Reality. Its task is not to trace the

- process of evolution, which belongs to Science, nor to weave fables about the rivalries and quarrels of so-called divine beings. But the Puranas indulge in such false science and story-telling to quite a sickening extent.

However, we conclude with two extracts from the *Bhāgavata* giving its more serious view, though couched in poetic language, of the Puranic Triad. In the beginning of Canto I, Chapter 3, it says :—

जगद्वै पौरुषं रूपं भगवान् महदादिभिः ।  
 सन्भूतं षोडशकलमादौ लीकसिद्धयुषा ॥  
 यस्यान्नासि भयानस्य योगनिद्रा वितन्वतः ।  
 नाभिःकृदाम्बुजादासीद् ब्रह्मा विश्वसृजां पतिः ॥  
 यस्यावयवसंस्थानैः कल्पितो लीकविस्तरः ।  
 तद्वै भगवतो रूपं विशुद्धं सत्त्वमुर्जितम् ॥  
 पश्यन्सदो रूपमदभ्यवचुषा  
 सहस्रपादोरुभुजाननाङ्गुलम् ।  
 सहस्रमुखं त्रयणास्तिनासिकं ।  
 सहस्रमौल्यम्बरकुण्डलोत्तसत् ॥  
 एतद्भानावताराणां निधानं बीजमव्ययम्  
 यस्यांशं शिन रुज्यन्ते देवतिर्यङ् नरादयः ॥

That is, "Wishing to create worlds, the Lord in the beginning assumed a personal form consisting of sixteen parts, *Mahat* and the rest. When (at the end of a cycle) he was in the sleep of *samādhi* in the (causal) waters, the chief of world-creators rose out of the lotus in the lake of his navel. That (*i. e.* the first) surely is

the Lord's form, pure and bright *sattvam*, from the arrangement of whose limbs the various worlds were formed. They (the seers) see this form with their enlightened eyes as consisting of a thousand wonderful feet, thighs, hands and faces, a thousand heads, ears, eyes and noses, and adorned with a thousand crowns, garments and earrings. 'This is the inexhaustible source of various incarnations, and out of its small parts (lit. parts of parts) *devas*, beasts and birds, men and other beings are formed.'

In Canto III, Chapter 9.16, Brahmá says in the course of his hymn of praise to Vishnu :—

यो वा अहस्र गिरिश्च विशुः स्वयञ्च

स्थित्यद्भुतप्रलयक्षेतव आत्मसूत्रम् ।

भिक्षा त्रिपाद वृक्षश्च एक उदप्ररोह-

स्तस्यै नमो भगवते भुवनङ्कुमाय ॥

That is, "I bow down to thee, O divine Tree of the world, who, the cause of creation, preservation and destruction as I, thyself the all-pervading one, and Siva, divided the root of thy self into three trunks and grew into a tree with great branches."

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## IX. The Puranic Doctrine of Illusion

The Puranas are known to be *Bhakti Śāstras*. In respect of emotional and practical religion they are believed to represent a distinct advance on the Upanishads and the literature directly founded on them. They indeed emphasise the importance of *bhakti* or reverential love to God and teach various methods of cultivating it. Their most distinctive teaching is that of God's incarnation in the form of great men—great teachers and workers. By teaching us to contemplate the works of these incarnations, they seek to awaken *bhakti* in our hearts, but their doctrine of incarnation is founded, as we have seen, on the Vedantic idea of the unity of God and man. A true doctrine of *bhakti*, however, cannot be founded on a purely monistic basis. For the purposes of deep worship and the feelings it arouses, God must indeed be brought as near to the soul of the worshipper as possible. The worshipper must realise the presence of his God vividly within and without him. And this realisation must owe nothing to imagination, but everything to direct knowledge. But for the purposes of real love and reverence it is also necessary that the worshipper should feel without a shadow of doubt that his God is infinitely greater than he—his own individuality. In other words a true philosophical basis of *bhakti* must have room in it for both Monism and Dualism. But we have searched the Puranas in vain for such a basis. The philosophy

underlying their teachings is Monism pure and simple. Later Vaishnava philosophers like Rámánuja, Madhva and Nimbárka, and notably those of the Chaitanya School of Bengal, have tried to formulate a doctrine of unity-in-difference as the true basis of *bhakti*. We shall speak of their attempts in some of our coming essays. As we have often shown in our previous writings, the teachings of the Upanishads are not always purely monistic. Some of the Upanishadic sages teach a form of qualified Monism—a doctrine which may be called one of unity-in-difference. But pure unqualified Monism has also a place in the Upanishads. It is this diversity of view that has led to the formation of two main schools of the Vedanta Philosophy—the Mâyávasi and the Parinámasi schools. It is curious that the chief Vaishnava Puranas, which form the very scriptures of the religion, accept the Mâyá theory without the least equivocation. Whenever they rise to a height of philosophical speculation and contemplation, they speak of the Supreme Being as pure undifferentiated consciousness, which by its inherent power of illusion manifests itself as the individual self and the diversified universe of things. The individual self, when it attains to a state of purity and a consciousness of its unity with Brahman, loses its individuality, they distinctly teach, and merges in the Universal. The doctrine of the imperishable existence of the individual in conscious unity with the Universal, so prominent in Christianity and in some of the later forms of Vaishnavism, has no place in these Puranas.

. That we do not misinterpret these *Bhakti Śāstras* and wrongly accuse them of allegiance to the doctrines of *Māyavāda* and *Layavāda*, will be evident from the following illustrations we are going to cite from two of the most revered Puranas, the *Vishnu* and the *Bhāgavata*. In part II, chapter 3, of the former, Parāsara, in describing Bhāratvarsha and its advanced worshippers, says of the latter :

कर्माण्यसङ्कल्पित तत्फलानि  
सन्त्यस्य विष्णो परमात्मभूते ।  
अवाप्य तां कर्ममद्धौमन्ते  
तस्मिन्नर्थं ये त्वमलाः प्रयान्ति ॥

That is, "Born in this land of works, these pure-hearted men, having offered to Vishnu, the Supreme Self, all their disinterested works and their fruits, are merged in the Infinite." In part IV, chapter 15, the same speaker, after narrating the destruction of Shishupāla at Krishna's hands says : "तेन तत् क्षरणादग्धाखिलाग्रसञ्चयी भगवतैवान्धमुपनोतः तस्मिन्नेव लयमाययौ ॥ That is, "All his stored up sins having been burnt by his remembrance of the Lord, and having been killed by the Lord himself, Shishupāla was merged in the latter." The same is said of a very different person, the royal sage Khāndikya, in the last but one chapter of the book :

तत्रैकान्तरतिर्भूत्वा यमादिरुच्यधीधितः ।  
विष्णुाख्ये निश्चले ब्रह्मण्यवाङ् नृपतिर्चयम् ॥

That is, "Being intensely devoted to the Lord and

purified by *yama* and other exercises, the king was merged in the pure Brahman called Vishnu.

The *Bhagavata* abounds in such instances. We cite only one from the 24th chapter of Canto XI, in which the final absorption of all things in Brahman is described by Krishna for the edification of Uddhava. After describing the successive merging of all relatively gross objects in the relatively subtle, from animal bodies at the one end to *Mahat* on the other, Krishna says :

स क्षीयते महान् खेषु गुणेषु गुणवत्तमः ।

तेऽव्यक्ते सम्प्रक्षीयन्ते तत् काले क्षीयतेऽव्यये ॥

काशी मायामये जीवे जीव आत्मनि मयाजी ।

आत्मा केवल आत्मस्यो विकल्पापाय-वृक्षः ॥

That is, "This *Mahat*, most richly endowed with *gunas*, merges in its own *gunas*. They in their turn merge in Prakriti and this in unmodified time. Time merges in the illusory individual, and the individual in me, the unborn Self. The Self, the source of all creation and destruction, is devoid of all *gunas* and is self-dependent."

An ethical view of the world,—of its creation for a supreme end towards which it is gradually progressing—is conspicuously absent in these writings in spite of all their tall talk about *bhakti*. The nature of this *bhakti*, which neither aspires after any moral ideal nor hopes for its ultimate realisation, we shall examine in another essay.

## X. Bhakti in the Vaishnava Puranas

The *bhakti* or piety inculcated in the Vaishnava Puranas comes out best in the hymns of praise and prayer with which they are interspersed. There are some fifty such hymns in the *Vishnu* and the *Bhāgavata* Purana, most of them being in the latter. These hymns are ascribed to historical or mythical persons introduced into the books. They are not hymns in the proper sense, most of them being full of rambling thought and containing not a little philosophical discussion. But such as they are, they serve to a great extent the purpose of stimulating the sort of piety characteristic of these semi-religious and semi-philosophical works. Their most striking feature is the Pantheism or Monism which runs through them. Without any regard to dramatic effect—to the difference of nature and temperament of the various characters dealt with,—this Monism is attributed to all devotees—to gods, men and demons, to old men and children, to erudite scholars and illiterate women. All are supposed to be familiar with the conclusions of the Vedānta philosophy and the technicalities of the Sāṅkhya, even of the attempted harmony of these philosophies. Sometimes even the refutation of opposed systems finds a place in these utterances, making it doubtful how much real communion with the indwelling Divine Spirit was enjoyed by the writers. However as to the unity set forth in these hymns, it does not

appear how much it was grasped by direct philosophical insight and how much is due to a reverent acceptance of the teachings of the Upanishads. Nothing like method is to be seen in the profuse philosophising which characterises these disquisitions. But the unity inculcated in them is thorough and uncompromising. God is identified with all things in the universe, great and small. The distinction of things and the varying degree of Divine manifestation in them is not clearly seen. It will not be unjust therefore to characterise the unity taught more as pantheistic than idealistic. But along with the immanence of God in man and nature, his transcendence is also recognised. This doctrine of transcendence takes the form of a theory of illusion. The true nature of God is taught to be absolute unity—an undifferentenced unity of consciousness—and the manifoldness and multiplicity of creation as ultimately illusory though practically real. That the unity has no meaning apart from the plurality, as the latter is unmeaning apart from the former, is not seen. Creation is taught as rising from a mere unity and as ultimately merging in that unity, leaving the whole intervening drama without any serious purpose. However, the object of emphasising the unity on the part of the Puranic writers is evident. There can be no real or deep *bhakti* so long as belief in God is a mere dogma—so long as his presence within and without is not felt with the directness of clear vision. Dualistic views of God cannot fulfil this condition of true piety. Any system of religion trying to fulfil this condition must

devotees is not *moksha*, that is the absorption in Brahman which is the ultimate goal of all created beings according to these Sāstras, but the devoted service, *seva*, of God. But what this *seva* or service means, is nowhere made clear in these writings. And it could not but be so. The service of God can mean only the service of his creatures, God as uncreated and perfect being above all wants and therefore requiring no service for himself. But this is what the Puranas, with their theory of illusion, do not and cannot see. Man, with all his wants, desires and pursuits, being illusory, cannot be, according to the Puranic system, a fit object of service. The Puranic devotee's aspiration for serving God could not therefore have any legitimate play or fulfilment. It could take only the one or the other of two alternative forms. It could take the form of a desire for absorption in God, as it actually does in the old Puranas. Or it could feel dissatisfied with the extreme abstractness of the Māyāvādi conception of God and conceive him in more anthropomorphic and sensuous forms, and thus hold that the service of God was also of a sensuous nature. That this is what actually took place in the later history of Vaishnavism, we shall see by and by. But before that we must see how and from what causes the old Vaishnavism, based mainly on the Vedānta, was transformed into a new system which cared little for its teachings, and which, if it tried to avoid some of its errors, committed others more serious than any ever committed by it, and fell into pitfalls from which nothing could deliver it.

## XI. The Old and the New School of Vaishnavism

Vaishnavism as a distinct creed was first formulated in some later rescension of the *Mahabharata*. At this stage and for a long period after, its philosophical basis and inspiration were derived from the Sankhya and the Vedanta philosophies or rather an attempted harmony of the two. The Vedantic doctrine of incarnation is only a developed form of the idea of the divine immanence in man and nature taught in certain portions of the *Rig-veda*, for instance the *Hamsavatī Rik* (V. 4.5), and *Rik* IV. 26.1, in which Vámadeva says, "I am the moon, I am the sun etc." and the well-known *Purusha Sukta* (*Rik*. X. 90). The Upanishads teach everywhere the doctrine of immanence or the fundamental unity of Creator and creation. But the most remarkable and oft-quoted passage on the subject is the third chapter of the *Kaushitaki* Upanishad. There, in the dialogue between Indra and Prataardana, Indra teaches that the highest good for man is to know me". But by "me" he means not his own individuality as a *deva*, but the Infinite One who is manifest in every person as his true Self. The scriptural basis of the philosophical doctrine of incarnation taught in the later sacred books of the country is this *Kaushitaki* text. The *Vedānta Sūtras* (I. 1.30) discuss it in the well-known aphorism *आत्मैव सावितर इति वासुदेवो ब्रह्मा*—i. e. "Indra speaks of himself as one with the Infinite by looking at himself in the light of Sastrie teaching as Vámadeva did in the *Rigveda*". It is



évident that the form of divine incarnation taught by the Vedanta must be a partial incarnation, for the very idea of incarnation or "becoming flesh" implies limitations of space, time and individuality. The Sanskrit word *avatára*, coming down, brings out even more clearly the idea of limitation. In the language of the *Bhagavadgítá* an incarnation of God is a *vibhúti* or manifestation of him. It is also evident that this manifestation becomes conscious only in rare individuals and that in them too this consciousness of fundamental unity with God comes in rare moments and disappears in the din and hurry of ordinary life. This is clearly recognised in the *Mahábhārata*. The same Krishna who is made to speak as God himself throughout the *Bhagavadgíta* is made to say in the *Anugítá*—when Arjuna begs him at the end of the war to repeat the teachings he had imparted to him at its beginning—that he has then lost the state of *yoga* in which he had given out those utterances and therefore cannot repeat them. Now, the old Puranas all follow this Vedantic tradition and speak of all incarnations, including Krishna himself, as partial. In Part V., Chapter 8, of the *Vishnupurána* the presiding deity of the earth appears before Mahá Vishnu, the great Lord of the world conceived as an embodied Being, and prays to him for deliverance from the oppression of the demons. In response to her prayer the Lord takes out a black and a grey hair from his own head and tells the goddess that these two hairs would be born as Krishna and Balárama and kill her oppressors. The *Bhágavata* repeats the same story in its Canto II.,

Chapter 7, verse 26. In several other passages the *Bhāgavata* speaks of Krishna as a partial incarnation of God, but curiously enough a well-known Bengali translation of the book renders the *amsa* ('a part') of these passages into *pūrṇa* ('full'), thus keeping up the glorious tradition of keeping the people ignorant of the real meaning of the Śāstras. Two of such passages will be found in Canto X, Chapter 2, of the book, where the author speaks of Krishna's birth as the son of Vasudeva and Devakī. The only passage in which the *Bhāgavata* speaks of Krishna as "God himself" and not a part of him is to be found in Canto I, Chapter 3, where, having enumerated twenty-two incarnations of God including Krishna himself among them, and having said that his incarnations are innumerable, the author says, in verse 28 :

एते चांशकलाः पुंसः कृष्णसु भगवान् स्वयम् ।

इन्द्रारिव्याकुलं लोकं नृदयन्ति युगे युगे ॥

*i. e.* "These parts of the great Person, — though Krishna is the Lord himself, — relieve the world from age to age when it is oppressed by the enemies of Indra," that is, the demons.

The parenthetical nature of the clause "कृष्णसु भगवान् स्वयम्" — "though Krishna is God himself" — seems to show that it is an interpolation and does not represent the real mind of the author. He may have thought of Krishna as the most glorious of all the human manifestations of God, but he cannot have so far forgotten his Vedantism as to fully identify an individual with the

Universal. However, the idea that he whom the Vaishnava movement chose as its central figure and extolled in various ways as the incarnation of God—as the most glorious of all his manifestations—was really,—so far as reason and the scriptures taught,—only a particle of the Supreme Being, must have troubled all thoughtful Vaishnavas in their serious moments and set them thinking of a way out of the difficulty. One of the main springs of the new Vaishnava movement—the movement led by the *Brahmaivaivarta* Purana—was the solution of this difficulty. How it was solved we shall see by and by.

Another leading idea of the new movement was that of *mādhurya*, already mentioned in our last essay. As we said in that essay, the dominant form of *bhakti* in the old Puranas is of the *aishvarya* type—that inspired by the contemplation of the divine glory. But *mādhurya*, as conceived by the Vaishnavas, had already been introduced, though in a rather undeveloped form, into some of the older Puranas. The sweetest form of of personal relationship is that between a lover and his beloved, and because love had become less and less free as Indian society degenerated more and more from its pristine simplicity, illicit love—love between a lover and his mistress, even though the latter might be a *parakīya*, another man's wife—was thought to be the most perfect form of *mādhurya*. The gradual development of this idea in Vaishnava literature may be briefly traced. The *Mahābhārata*, though it narrates the youthful feats of Krishna at Brindaban, says nothing

about his amorous relations with the Gopís, the cowherdesses. This seems to show that the story of these relations was not invented at the time of the composition of the *Mahábhārata*. If the story had existed at the time, it would surely have been put into Sisupála's mouth in disparagement of Krishna when he brought his long series of charges against the latter at Yudhisthira's *rājasúya*. We find it first stated in the *Vishnu*, one of the most ancient of the Puranas. But it had not yet assumed the horrid form it gradually did. In his description of the Rásalílá the author is evidently conscious that he is narrating deeds worthy of condemnation according to the rules of social etiquette. But he tries to narrate them as discreetly as he can. We next find the Rásalílá described in the *Harivamsa*, considered as a supplement of the *Mahábhārata*. Its long genealogies of the Kurus and the Yadus, absent in the *Mahábhārata* and the *Vishnu Purana*, and such other matters show it to be a later work than the latter. In its description of Krishna's dealings with the cowherdesses it is less discreet than the *Vishnu Purana*, but it nevertheless exercises some reserve. Next comes the *Bhágavata*, which cannot have been composed earlier than the thirteenth century after Christ, for it not only mentions Buddhist emperors of India like the *Vishnu*, but even Turkish rulers, evidently the Pathan invaders and kings of north-western India. This, the most honoured of all Puranas, throws away all reserve and gives a very realistic description of the Rásalílá. But the seekers of *mádhurya* were not yet satisfied.

They thought that even the *Bhāgavata's* description of the Rāsālīlā was not realistic enough, and they proceeded to make it more so in the *Brahmaivarta Purana*. And they thought the *Bhāgavata's* mention of the Gopīs as too impersonal. Even the one Gopī in whose company Krishna left the others and roamed in the woods was left without a name. Rādhā, who figures so prominently in the new school of Vaishnavism, is nowhere in the old Vaishnava literature from the *Mahābhārata* to the *Bhāgavata Purana*. These serious omissions, the new Vaishnavas thought, must be supplied and it must be told who the Gopīs were, specially Rādhā, the chief of them,—whose child, whose wife, she was. Thirdly, the moral stigma attached to the Gopīs, namely that they were *parakīyās*, must, if possible, be removed by a new theology which would show that they, though other men's wives in human eyes, were eternally connected with Krishna in the Heaven of heavens. All these motives led to the new Vaishnava movement,—to the formulation of a system which reversed many things contained in the old. Of this new system we shall speak in another essay.

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## XII. The Rádhā-Krishna Cult

As we have already said, the *Brahmavaivarta* Purana is the chief authority on the new school of Vaishnavism or the Rádhā-Krishna Cult. It is difficult to speak with patience of this book with its stories of the jealousies and quarrels of gods and goddesses, its outrageously indecent descriptions of the Rásalílá and the loose ideas of morals permeating every portion of it. How it came to be recognised as a sacred book, as one of the eighteen Puranas, is a wonder and brings sad reflections on the religious condition of the country during the centuries immediately preceding the dawn of the present age. There is a tendency in some recent writers on Krishna and Vaishnavism to disown this work. But to disown it is to ignore the form of Vaishnavism prevalent in Bengal and some other parts of India. And to ignore this religion is to ignore the vast literature,—poetical, musical and devotional,—which has grown out of it and moulded the life and character of the people. Whatever therefore may be our feelings about the *Brahmavaivarta*, we must for a time lay them aside and speak patiently of the theology it teaches. It teaches not only the worship of Krishna in a new garb, but that of other gods and goddesses also, in fact all the deities that we find worshipped in the country, specially in Bengal, at the present time. It is the exponent not only of modern Vaishnavism, but in a large measure of modern Hinduism. But we shall

confine ourselves to its exposition of the Rádhá-Krishna cult and leave out of consideration its praise of Siva, Sakti, Lakshmí, Sarasvatí, Ganesha, Kártikeya, Gangá and Shashthí. We shall say only a word about the time of its composition. If the *Bhāgavata* belongs to the thirteenth century after Christ, the *Brahma-vairarta* cannot have been composed earlier than the fourteenth or the fifteenth century. The gorgeous or rather gaudy imagery it adopts in describing the cities of both gods and men seems to show that the author was not unfamiliar with the luxury and splendour of the Muhammadan courts of India. Brindaban, which is only a pastoral settlement with green meadows and leafy bowers to the earlier Vaishnava poets, is, to this latter day Vaishnava, a magnificent city of palaces made of various kinds of precious stones by Visvakarman, the divine mason. In fact the *Brahma-vairarta*, with its new erotic Vaishnavism, cannot be very far from the days of Chaitanya. In reading the life of this reformer one finds that even in his days the prevailing Vaishnavism of the province was of the old type, and that it was he and his followers who were the chief factors in making the new cult popular.

As we have already said, the *Brahma-vairarta* reverses many things taught in the old system. According to it Krishna is not an *avatāra* or incarnation, but the Supreme Being himself. And the Supreme Being is not, it holds, formless, as the Upanishads teach and as the old Vaishnava scriptures teach after them, but a

corporeal being, having the human form. It is only the partial vision of the *yogins* that makes them contemplate God as mere formless light. How can light, it argues, proceed out of an incorporeal being? In the midst of the light which alone the *yogins* see, there is, it says, the most exquisite form, a male form holding a lute with its two hands. (Chapter 2 of Books I & II—*Brahma Khanda* and *Prakriti Khanda*). Krishna is often called *nirguna* or transcendent, though how his transcendence is consistent with his corporeal nature and the passions and actions attributed to him, is not explained. In fact the author is not a philosopher in any sense or degree, but merely a poet with a most sensuous imagination. However, Krishna is described as living in Goloka, supposed to be the highest of heavens, with its Brindaban and *Rāsa-mandala*, the originals of the earthly village and pleasure-ground bearing these names. In the second and third chapters of Book I the chief subordinate gods and goddesses are described as issuing from the body of Krishna. First came out the four-armed Nārāyana, holding in his hands the four divine insignia—the conch, the quoit, the club and the lotus. It is this god who is the chief object of worship in the old system of Vaishnavism. Next came out the five-faced Siva, who is described everywhere in this Purana as the chief worshipper of Krishna. Then arose the four-armed Brahmā, the creator of the visible world. The author denies that Siva represents *tamas* and is the god of destruction. This function, he says, belongs to



another god. Siva, according to our author, is *sāttvika*, as also is Nārāyaṇa. Brahmā is *rājasika* and Kālāgnirudra, the god of destruction, alone *tāmasika*. However, to this triad are added Dharma and Kāma. Like the chief gods, the chief goddesses also,—Durgā, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī,—issued from Krishna's body and were assigned as consorts to the chief gods. The fifth goddess who came out from him was Rādhā and was owned by himself. She is said to have issued from him while Krishna was visiting the Rāsamandala with the other gods. As she came out, she ran to pluck a flower and came back and offered it to Krishna. From this circumstance she was named Rādhā.

आविर्भव कन्यका कृष्णस्य वामपार्श्वतः ।

धावित्वा पुष्पमानीय ददावर्धं प्रभोः पदे ॥

रासे सन्भूय गोलोके सा दधाव हरिः पुरः ।

तेन राधा समाख्याता पुराविद्भिर्हिजोत्तम ॥

That is, "There came out from the left side of Krishna a girl who ran to bring a flower and placed it as an offering on the Lord's feet. Oh chief of the twice-born, (says the story-teller to Saunaka, his hearer) as she arose in the Rāsamandala in Goloka and ran towards Hari, so is she called Rādhā by the historians." This derivation is of course quite artificial. The name Rādhā was perhaps originally derived from an expression occurring in a line in the *Bhāgavata*. In its description of the Rāsālīlā, a Gopī asks her companions why Krishna has chosen a particular Gopī out of so

many who danced with him and entered into the woods with her. The answer given by another Gopí is, “अनयाराधितो नूनं भगवान् हरिरोत्तरः ।”—“Surely the Lord Hari has been worshipped or fervently worshipped by her.” *Rādhita* or *ārādhita* comes from the root *rādh*, to worship, and *Rādhá* means a worshipper and has nothing to do with *Rísa* or *dhá* to run. However, *Rādhá* from her very birth became the dearest Gopí to Krishna. The other Gopís—*laksha-koti*, a lakh of crores in number—came out of the pores of *Rādhá*’s body. Thirty crores of Gopas in the same manner arose out of the pores of Krishna’s. Why the denizens of the highest heaven are made cowherds and cowherdresses in preference to other classes of men and women is of course clear. They are to be brought down in their original characters to the earthly Brindaban where the earlier poets located them. What led to this descent we shall see by and by. Before that we must hear of the birth of Mahāvishnu, who, according to the old Puranas, sent down a black and a grey hair of his head to incarnate themselves as Krishna and Balarāma. Mahāvishnu came out of an egg of golden colour which *Rādhá* brought forth, but which she angrily cast down into the waters of Goloka. As our author says,—

शतमन्वन्तरातीतकालेऽतीतेऽपि सुन्दरी ।

सुषाव दिव्यं स्वर्णं विशाखारालयं परम् ॥

दृष्ट्वा दिव्यं सा देवी हृदयेन विदूयता ।

उत्ससर्ज्य च कोपेन ब्रह्माण्डं गोष्ठके जले ॥

That is, “At the end of a hundred cycles the beauti-

ful lady brought forth an egg of a golden colour which is the chief seat of the Support of the whole world. On seeing that egg the goddess, with a saddened heart, angrily cast it down into the waters of Goloka." The egg, however, though thus deserted by its cruel parent,—and for this act of cruelty she was severely censured and cursed with perpetual childlessness by her lord,—was preserved in the primeval waters and from it issued the child from the pores of whose body arose innumerable worlds with their innumerable Brahmás, Vishnus and Sivas. Our author thus takes revenge on the earlier Vaishnava poets for making his lord Krishna a hair of Mahá Vishnu's head.

Rádhá and Krishna's descent from Goloka into the earth came about in the following manner. (See chaps. 2, 3 &c., of book IV.—*Krishnajanma Khanda*.) Rádhá heard that Krishna was living with Virajā, another Gopí and one of her crores of companions. This enraged her so much that she abused her lord in the foulest language and proceeded in a car to punish the delinquents. Virajā was so much terrified at the report of Rádhá's coming to meet her, that she gave up the ghost and turned into a river. And Krishna ran away, but at last gathered courage to face his angry lady. Then came out three curses from three of the deities concerned which led to their and the whole lot of Goloka deities being born as earthly beings. Rádhá said to Krishna :—

अथत् ते मानुषाणां च व्यवहारश्च लब्धः ।

जन्मतां मानुषीं योनिं गोपीकाद नञ् भारतम् ॥

“O licentious person, your conduct is always like that of men. So be born as a man, leave Goloka and go to India.” Sridāma, a companion of Krishna, having taken the lady to task for abusing her lord, was cursed by the lady in the following words :—

गोप ब्रजासुरीं योनिं गोलोकाच्च वहिर्भव ।

मयाद्य शप्तो मूढस्त्वं कस्त्वं रक्षितुमीश्वरः ॥

“O Gopa, go and be born as a demon ; go out of Goloka ; I curse you to-day ; O fool, who can protect you ?”

Cursing is a divine privilege in the Puranas, specially in the Purana under notice, and poor Sridāma, though much lower in rank than his master and mistress, was not a bit backward in using this privilege, and so he hurled the following terrible curse on Rādhā :—

मनुष्या इव कोपस्ते तस्मात् त्वं मानुषी भव ।

भविष्यसि न सन्देहो मया शप्ता त्वमम्बिके ॥

क्वायया कलया वापि परयस्या कलङ्किनी ।

मूढा रायाणपत्नी त्वां वक्ष्यन्ति जगतीतले ॥

“O mother, your rage is like that of women, so be a woman. Cursed by me, you will undoubtedly be, if only in appearance and in part, in another person’s possession, and thus infamous. Fools on earth will call you Ráyāna’s wife.”

In this manner, which satisfied our author and continued to satisfy his numerous followers in the country, Rādhā’s disgrace as a *parakīya* is sought to

be removed. And that is the case also with the other Gopís. They really belong to Krishna, but were born as other men's wives only *chháyayā*, in shadow or appearance, or *kalayā*, in part. And the author proceeds farther. He makes Brahmá give Rádhá in marriage to Krishna in the right Vedic style, but a little too early for Krishna, as he was then only three years old, though this does not matter much in the case of a divine being. As Nanda, Krishna's foster-father, was one day sitting under a tree, minding his flock and with the infant Krishna on his arms, a storm came and Nanda became anxious for the child. Fortunately there appeared Rádhá, already a grown up young woman, and Nanda gave the child to her charge. While passing through the woods, a splendid house, filled with all comforts and luxuries, was improvised by Krishna's divine power, and there the pair was married and enjoyed each other's company before they parted. But the parting was only temporary. They met constantly in Brindaban and were at last—after a hundred years—re-united in Goloka.

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### XIII. Vaishnava Worship

We have seen in our tenth article,—that on “*Bhakti* in the Vaishnava Puranas”—what the chief elements of Vaishnava worship are. But our remarks on the subject apply more to the old than to the new form of Vaishnavism. How the former was gradually transformed into the latter, we have seen in our eleventh and twelfth essays. The change was from the theory of general incarnation to that of special incarnation, from the conception of Vishnu as having the form of the world to that of his having the human form, and from the contemplation of his *aisvarya*, glory, to that of his *mádhurya*, sweetness, the latter conceived in a most sensuous form. The inevitable result of this change was the degradation of worship, its transformation from spiritual contemplation resulting in exalted feelings to the worship of images with material offerings, with the inevitable effect of arresting the growth of true wisdom and promoting only a puerile sentimentalism. It is a very interesting question,—one that has engaged the attention and study of Indianist scholars,—at what stage of our national life the worship of images was introduced. It is universally admitted that it is a comparatively modern innovation, that the “Sanatan Dharma” (the eternal religion) managed to do without it for centuries. We find no trace of it in Vedic literature, in the *Mantras*, *Brahmanas*, *A’ranyakas* and *Upanishads*

and yet when these works were composed, our ancestors were surrounded by numerous idolatrous peoples. The *rishis* must have guarded their followers against imitating their idolatrous neighbours as jealously as the Hebrew prophets had guarded the Israelites against a similar danger. The Vedic worshippers indeed recognised the *devas*, the powers of nature, and worshipped them with material offerings in the same manner as the ancient Hebrews worshipped their Yaveh in his temple at Jerusalem. But the former were as free as the latter from the childish worship of deities made with their own hands. And it was recognised by the wisest of the *rishis* even from the earliest times that it was '*ekam sat*', the one only Being, whom the wise, '*biprāh*', call by various names, '*bahudā vadanti*'. In the *Upanishads* the unity was definitely conceived and clearly formulated, and the *devas*, when their existence was not denied, distinctly recognised as mere inquirers and worshippers like men. The first mention of images in post-Vedic literature is said to be found in some of the Vedic *Sūtras*, the aphoristic works summarising the elaborate directions of the *Brāhmanas*. But the *Sūtra* period is contemporaneous with the Buddhist, and the conclusion arrived at by some Indianists that idolatry was first introduced by the Buddhists is not at all weakened by the mention of idols in some of the *Sūtras*. Having dismissed both God and the *devas*, and having gained large additions of primitive non-Aryans to their ranks, the Buddhists were the most likely to feel the need of some tangible

objects of worship,—images of Buddha and Buddhist saints—for those members of their body who were unfit to practise the forms of meditation prescribed by their founder. And once introduced into Aryan society, idolatry could not but be imitated by the lower orders of that society, however repulsive it might be to its leaders. Even when so introduced, it evidently did not form a part of the recognised form of national worship for centuries. The code of Manu, which came much later than the *Sûtras*, does not even mention it, far from recognising it. It seems to make a contemptuous reference to it when it includes "*devāla Brahmanas*", probably worshippers of idols, among classes of men to be excluded from the *yajnas* or sacrificial rites. The *Mahābhārata*, coming much later than Manu's code and containing numerous quotations from it, makes no mention of idol-worship. Even the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, which distinctly mentions Buddhism and names Buddhist kings, makes no mention of idolatry, far from prescribing it. The only forms of worship recognised by it are the Vedic and the Vedantic—fire-sacrifices to the *devas* and the adoration of God by hymns of praise and prayer. The first mention of image-worship in Puranic literature is found in the *Bhāgavata*, which, as we have already seen, belongs to the thirteenth century after Christ. And even in the *Bhāgavata* the reference to this form of worship is contemptuous and only concessive till we come to the end of the eleventh canto, where alone it is definitely prescribed. The *Bhāgavata*, very much



like the *Mahābhārata*, seems to be the work of many hands, of writers who thought and felt very differently from one another. It is difficult to believe that the description of the *Rāsālīlā* on the one hand and the more devout hymns of praise and the many exhortations on love of mankind and purity of heart on the other are from the same hand. Similarly it can scarcely be believed that the following two sets of teachings on idolatry are from the same writer. In canto VII, Kapila, said to be an incarnation of God, says to Devahūti, his mother :—

अहं सर्वेषु भूतेषु भूतात्मावस्थितः सदा ।  
 तमवज्ञाय मां मर्त्तयः कुरुतेऽर्चाविडम्बनम् ॥  
 यो मां सर्वेषु भूतेषु सन्तमात्मानमीश्वरम् ।  
 हित्वाऽर्चां भजते मौढ्याद् भक्त्यन्येव जुहोति सः ॥  
 दिष्टतः परकाये मां मानिनो भिन्नदर्शिनः ।  
 भूतेषु बहुवैरस्य न मनः शान्तिमश्नुति ॥  
 अहमुच्चावचैर्द्रव्यैः क्रिययीत्यज्ञयानघे ।  
 नैव तुष्टोऽर्चितोऽर्चायां भूतग्रामावमानिनः ॥  
 अर्चादानर्चात्तावदीश्वरं मां स्वकर्म्मकृत् ।  
 यावन्न वेद स्वहृदि सर्वभूतेष्ववस्थितम् ॥

That is, "I am seated in all creatures as their Self. Men disregard me and practise a caricature of worship in idols. He who leaves me, who live in all creatures as their Self and Ruler, and foolishly worships idols, only pours libations on ashes. The heart of that man does not find peace who hates me in the persons of others, who is proud, partial, and inimical to all

creatures. O pure-hearted lady, I am not pleased when I am worshipped with various kinds of offerings and with mere rites in idols set up by one who treats created beings with disrespect. A man faithful to his duties should worship me, the Lord, in idols only so long as he does not know me as seated in his own heart and in all creatures." (Verses 21-25)

Now, mark the change of tone and attitude in the following verses from chapter 27 of the eleventh canto. The words are ascribed to Krishna and the hearer is his friend and disciple Uddhava :—

शैली दारुमयी लौह्ये लीया लीय्या च सैकती ।

मनोमयी मणिमयी प्रतिमाद्विधा कृता ॥

द्रव्यैः प्रसिद्धैर्मद्यागः प्रतिमादिष्वभायिनः ।

भक्तस्य च यथाशक्त्यैर्हृदि भावेन चैव हि ॥

स्नानालङ्करणं प्रेष्ठमर्चयामेव नृद्वय ।

स्थण्डिले तत्त्वविन्यासी वज्राबाजासु तं हविः ।

सूयै चान्यहंशं प्रेष्ठं सलिले सलिखादिभिः ॥

That is, "There are eight kinds of images—those made of stone, wood, metal, clay or sandal-paste, and gems, those which are painted and those which are only imagined. The worship of me by pure-hearted devotees with excellent offerings, such as can be procured, in images and such other forms is most dear to me, as also in the heart with pious feelings. Bathing and adorning me in images, placing sacrificial objects on altars, and casting things soaked in clarified butter into fire are most dear to me, O Uddhava, and

so are the adoration of me in the sun and my worship in water with water."

We need not multiply extracts. Kapila's contemptuous reference to idolatry seems to be intentionally protested against in the above words. His '*Na tushye*' is met by Krishna's '*preshtam*'. Henceforth the tide set in strongly in the direction of a complex and elaborate system of idolatry. And it could not but be so. When, as in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāna*, the Supreme Being was represented as of the human form, with a female consort, both having human passions and appetites, worship could not but take a most material and sensuous form. We find such worship everywhere prescribed in the Purana just named, in the *Nārada Pancharātra*, which closely follows it and in recent works on Vaishnava devotions. However, it may be worthwhile to inquire what and how much real religion survived this great shipwreck of the national faith, and this we mean to do in some of our following essays.

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#### XIV. Form and the Formless

Before we undertake to estimate the real value of the new phase of Vaishnavism, all but hidden under the elaborate system of idolatry which forms its most prominent characteristic, we may as well cogitate a little more on the essence of the old Vaishnava form of worship. We have seen that its attitude towards idolatry is more concessive than prescriptive. A close study of the *Bhāgavata* leaves no doubt that image-worship forms no essential part of the religion it teaches. The only form of the Divine Being it really recognises is the Universe, and this also it speaks of as a transient and ever-changing form. The unchanging eternal Spirit in man and nature is to it the only fit object of worship. But, as we have already seen in our seventh essay, it recognises the popularly believed and worshipped image of Vishnu as a symbol of the world-form of God. And it goes farther. It prescribes the contemplation of Vishnu in this form as a *sādhana*, a means to the realisation of his true nature. Following the Vedānta it teaches that the only fit object of love is our true Self—the Infinite Spirit in us. But it knows—what does not seem to have been clearly seen by the old *rishis* and those who latterly revived and expounded the system taught by them—that love can be inspired and sustained only by the vision and contemplation of the beautiful. By “the beautiful,” however, the Vaishnavas understood almost exclusively the

beautiful in form. Vishnu, and latterly Krishna, was conceived as the perfection of form. The *Bhāgavata* prescribes the contemplation of the beauty of Vishnu as a means to the culture of *bhakti*. But as it does not believe that Vishnu has any real form, and even teaches that at a higher stage of worship all forms should be discarded and the mind fixed on the formless Spirit alone as the real object of devotion, it is not clear of what real use the contemplation of form may be. The Vaishnavas of the new school were more consistent, though far less enlightened, in their views. As we have seen, they believed the human form to be the real form of God. And in Krishna they believed they had got a historical manifestation of that form to human eyes. The contemplation of form therefore and even its worship with material offerings was not to them a merely temporary means, but of the very essence of *bhakti*. It was not so to the old Vaishnavas with their fidelity to the Vedānta, to which the Real is formless and form only transient and even unreal. However, we shall give the teachings of the *Bhāgavata* on this subject in its own words. Its eleventh chapter is regarded as containing the very gist of its teachings on *bhakti*. It is much extolled and has been published separately in various forms and with various expositions. Reading it again and again, however, we do not find that it teaches anything more substantial than what the *Bhāgavadgītā* does. In speaking of *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma* it follows the same lines that are laid down by the latter. The emphasis it puts on *bhakti* as distinct from mere

*jñāna* or knowledge, is somewhat stronger than what we find in the *Gītā*, and this it does in beautiful verses which are often quoted with admiration. But as to the true method of cultivating *bhakti*, we do not find that it throws any more light than the teachings of the *Gītā* on the subject. On the contrary, some of its teachings on the means of cultivating *bhakti* are unhealthy, far more objectionable than those of the *Gītā* on the subject. The latter stops at deifying Krishna. It does not prescribe the contemplation of the form of either Krishna or Vishnu. The *Bhāgavata* does prescribe such contemplation and thus leads the way to idolatry. Here, however, is the *Bhāgavata* teaching on the contemplation of the form popularly ascribed to Vishnu and the realisation of the Formless to which such contemplation should lead. In chapter XIV of the eleventh canto Krishna says to Uddhava :—

वज्रिमध्ये स्मरेद् रूपं ममेतद् ध्यानमङ्गलम् ।  
 सत्त्वं प्रशान्तं सुमुखं दीर्घ-चारु-चतुर्भुजम् ॥  
 सुचारु-सुन्दर-श्रीवं सुकपोलं युधिष्ठितम् ।  
 समानकर्णं-बिन्दुस्त-स्तु रत्नकर-कुण्डलम् ॥  
 हेमाम्बरं चनश्चामं श्रीवत्स-श्रीनिकेतनम् ।  
 शङ्खचक्रगदापद्म-वनमाला-विभूषितम् ॥  
 नूपुरैर्विलसत्पादं कौस्तुभप्रभया युतम् ।  
 युग्मत् किरीट-कटक-कटि-सूत्राङ्गदायुतम् ॥  
 सर्वोङ्गसुन्दरं हृदयं प्रसादसुमुखेक्षणम् ।  
 सुकुमारमभिध्यायेत् सर्वोङ्गेषु मनो दधत् ॥  
 इन्द्रियानौन्द्रियार्थेष्वन्यो मनसाकथं तन्मनः ॥

बुद्ध्या सारथिना धीरः प्रचयेन्मयि सर्वतः ॥  
 तत् सर्वव्यापकं चित्तमाकूष्यैकत्र धारयेत् ।  
 नान्यानि चिन्तयेद्भूयः सुखितं भावयेन्मुखम् ॥  
 तच्च लक्ष्यपदं चित्तमाकूष्य योगिनि धारयेत् ।  
 तच्च लक्ष्मा मदारोहो न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥  
 एवं समाहितमतिममिवात्मानमात्मनि ।  
 विषये मयि सर्व्वात्मन् जगोतिजग्रीतिषि संयुतम् ॥  
 ध्यानेनेयं सुतीव्रेण युञ्जती योगिनो मनः ।  
 संयास्यत्वाशु निर्व्वाणं द्रव्यज्ञानक्रियाधमः ॥

That is—"In fire think of my form as described below, as such meditation is beneficial. The limbs finely proportioned, the demeanour calm, the face beautiful, the four arms long and fine. The neck well-formed, the cheeks nicely rounded and the lips with a sweet smile on them. The ears proportionate to each other and adorned with ear-rings. The dress of a golden colour, the complexion deeply green, the chest containing a beautiful cluster of hair, the arms holding the conch, quoit, club and lotus and the neck beautified with a garland of wild flowers. The feet adorned with tinkling bells, the body shining with the lustre of the *Kaustubha* gem and ornamented with a glittering crown, armlets and a waist-chain. Beautiful in every respect, attractive to the heart, with face and eyes charming from benignity. Meditate on this beautiful form by fixing your mind on every one of its limbs. A wise man should draw away his senses from their objects with his mind and with the help of *buddhi*, the

charioteer, fully concentrate that mind in me. Again drawing away this mind, moving everywhere, he should fix it on one point. Think no more of other things, think only of the sweetly smiling face. When the mind has got a footing there, draw it away and fix it on space (as the container of all things). Then give up even that and fixing the mind on me, think of nothing else. One whose mind is thus concentrated sees me as the Self in himself and himself in me as the Universal Self like light united to light. For the *yogin* who thus concentrates his mind with deep meditation the consciousness of things (as distinct realities) and the error of the reality of actions will soon cease."

There is a real ascent in rising from form to the Formless. But if the Formless thus reached is only an abstract universal, without contents and without internal relations, how can it inspire either love or reverence? If it is only beauty that can inspire and sustain *bhakti*, the formless self reached by the author of the *Bhágavata* is not a fit object of *bhakti*. We do not see therefore that with all its stories and anecdotes, however attractive, and its powerful emphasis on the importance of cultivating *bhakti*, so much admired by its students, the *Bhágavata*, in which the old form of Vaishnavism reaches its climax, represents any real advance on Vedantic *Máyaváda*. With all his strenuous efforts, its author fails to throw off the firm grip which the latter has laid on him.

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## XV. Latter-day Vaishnavism

With the promulgation of the Rádhá-Krishna cult the worship of God, the Absolute Spirit, practically ceased in Vaishnavism, and the imaginative and ceremonial worship of Krishna, conceived as a hero, specially as the lover of Rádhá, became the predominant, almost the sole, element in the spiritual exercises, if they can be so called, of the new school. Krishna indeed was believed to be the incarnation of the Supreme Being, or else he would not be worshipped, but God's attributes as the upholding and guiding Spirit of nature and immanent in it and as the Inner Self of man, ceased to have any attraction for the Krishna-worshipper, and his whole attention was absorbed by Krishna's Brindában-líla, specially his amorous dealings with the *Gopís*. In short, it is not as God, but rather as a man, in his bodily form and human dealings, that Krishna now began to receive worship. To those unfamiliar with latter-day Vaishnava literature this may seem an over-statement, but a close study of Vaishnava works on devotions following the writing of the *Brahmavaivarta* Purana leaves no doubt of the truth of our statement. We have already mentioned the *Nárada-Pancharátra*, which closely follows that Purana in spirit. It seems probable that the *Brahmavaivarta* was preceded in the same line—in teaching a Rádhá-Krishna doctrine—by other works and that the doctrine was not originated, but only

developed by it. The story of Rádhá as the chief of the *Gopís* and that of her parentage, marriage with Ráyána, A'ýána or Abhimanyu, as he is variously named by the poets, and her illicit relations with Krishna was perhaps conceived before the *Brahmavaivarta* was written, and the latter perhaps only elaborated it and tried to absolve Rádhá and the other *Gopís* from the charge of contracting an unholy friendship with Krishna by describing the whole Brindaban settlement as a colony from Goloka. But no work earlier than this Purana has yet been discovered which contains the Rádhá-Krishna story. The *Padma Purana*, which contains it, has been proved to be a much later production, as appears from the proofs stated in the late Babu Akshaykumar Datta's *Bhārata-varshīya Upāsaka Sampradāya*. However, whether the *Brahmavaivarta* actually began the movement or not, the composition of this Purana was undoubtedly followed by numerous works detailing the incidents of the Rádhá-Krishna story, naming Rádhá's relations on her husband's side and narrating their persecution of her owing to her love of Krishna, which to them seemed disgraceful, naming also her fellow-shepherdesses and Krishna's *Gopa* friends, all of whom favoured and helped on the intrigue. By the time Chaitanya appeared, a vast literature on the subject seems to have grown up—a literature of which one gets an idea from the renowned work on Vaishnava devotions named *Bhaktirasāmrita-sindhu* written by Rupa Gosvāmin, one of Chaitanya's immediate disciples. The Rádhá-Krishna cult, however,

was confined to—at any rate accepted as an integral part of their religion by—only one or two of the four principal sects into which modern Vaishnavism was divided. These four sects are the Śrī sect founded by Rámánuja, the Brahma sect by Madhva, the Rudra led by Vallabha and the Sanaka by Nimbárka. The minor Vaishnava sects all filiate themselves to the one or the other of the four sects named, though some of them, for instance the Chaitanya sect, are practically distinct and independent movements. The latter sect owes allegiance to Madhva, but is closely related, both in doctrine and the time of foundation, to that of Vallabha, founded by his father, Vishnuswámin, but better known by the name of the son. It would hardly be too much to say that the Rádha-Krishna cult is confined to these two sects and their various ramifications. It has found its most fertile field in Bengal, where it is almost the only form of Vaishnavism known. The Bengali character, with its remarkable softness, its keen perception of the sweet and the beautiful, and, we must add with deep regret, its effiminacy and moral atrophy, has taken to the ideals and practices of the school with a zest and earnestness impossible perhaps to any other race. Chaitanya, we need hardly say, is not the founder, but the reviver of the cult. His disciples, however, under his inspiration, have enriched it with a literature whose vastness and subtle influence its makers may justly be proud of, but whose moral and spiritual value it has become possible only now to estimate, as new ideals and aspirations,

very different from those which have guided our people for centuries, have dawned on us with the advent of a new age. It does not fall within the scope of these essays to undertake such an estimate. Theirs is a much humbler task,—to mark the different stages through which the Vaishnavism of the Puranas, which, as we have shewn, had its origin in the Vedas, has passed. And this task is now done. The Puranas which teach the Rádhá-Krishna cult are the last of this class of literature. After them, and contemporaneously with some of them, come the age of the Tantras and the vast literature, Sanskrit and Vernacular, created by the sects we have named. We do not intend, nor are we competent, to trace the development of the Vaishnava doctrine at the hands of these sects. The present writer has said something on the philosophy of Rámánuja in his *Vedánta and its Relation to Modern Thought*. He has shown there that notwithstanding Rámánuja's able refutation of Sankara's Máyaváda, the former lacks the latter's keen philosophical insight and that his qualified Monism is not really a philosophical reconstruction, but rather a juxtaposition of the Monism of some of the composers the Upanishads and the Dualism of popular thought, the latter being his real faith and the former something which he accepts only on the authority of the Upanishads. From what the present writer has read of Madhva and the followers of Chaitanya, it seems to him that they are not philosophers at all in the common acceptance of the term.—that they have no reasoned

system, but are simple believers in the authority of the Vedas and the Puranas, appealing to them, specially to the latter, at every turn and accepting their pronouncements to be final on all questions at issue. Such a literature can be of little use in an age in which authority has veered from scripture to universal reason and personal insight. Hence it has no attraction for us. There are indeed vast numbers of our people in whom the logical intellect has not awakened and spiritual insight is all but dormant, and to whom therefore this literature will not fail to appeal. But we write not for this class of people, but rather for those whom a liberal system of education has freed from the thralldom of external authority. However, though refraining generally from a review of the Vaishnava literature which has grown up on the teachings of the Puranas, ancient and modern, we shall make one exception,—we shall close this series of essays with a brief sketch of the *Bhakti* teachings of Chaitanya and his followers, especially as they have influenced not a little the recent religious thought of the country since the days of Brahmánanda Kesavachandra Sen.

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## XVI. The Bengal School of Vaishnavism

An age of creation and construction seems invariably to be followed by one of mere interpretation and exposition. The *rishis* who uttered the grand truths of the Upanishads had no external authority to appeal to. Their own thoughts and spiritual insight were the only sources of the doctrines they taught. The Vedic *Mantras* and *Brāhmanas* had indeed preceded them; but they had practically rejected the religion taught in these works as mere ceremonial and strove to rise to a higher stage of spiritual life. They uttered what they thought to be true and knew that others—even their own contemporaries—thought differently from them. As the present writer has shown in his *Lectures on the Theism of the Upanishads and other subjects*, they questioned and criticised one another's opinion even on the gravest matters. But a very different age followed these original thinkers. Those who came after them regarded their utterances as so much revelation to be accepted without question. They thought they were neither to discover nor verify by independent thinking the doctrines taught by the *rishis*, but simply to take them for granted and controvert opposed doctrines by citing them. The differences among the *rishis* themselves seemed to them only apparent, and one of their tasks, besides giving verbal expositions of the Upanishadic doctrines, was to harmonize, as well as they could, these apparent

contradictions. Whatever ability the later Vedantic philosophers show thus consists mostly in exegesis and controversy. The age of the earliest epics and of the Puranas is in a sense an age of creation and construction. Their authors invent stories to touch the hearts and imagination of their readers and try thereby to draw them to God. Those who invent stories do not believe in them. As we have shown in these essays, the authors of the earlier Puranas had a higher religion than what was embodied in the stories told by them. This may be said also of the writers of the later Puranas like the *Brahmavaivarta*. At any rate they cannot be said to be believers in the creations of their own imagination. As we have shown, the Krishna legend continually grew at the hands of successive Vaishnava poets, the later ones making fresh additions to what they had received from their predecessors. Poets know what poetry is and what it is not. Minute details of sayings and doings ascribed to individuals, such as we find in the Puranas, belong not to history, but to poetry and fiction. But the age which followed that of the creative Vaishnava poets seems to have been singularly credulous and unimaginative. It took all poetry as history. It regarded every detail of the epic and Puranic account of Krishna as true and based its religious life on them as on a system of theology. Not only the Puranas, but even the mass of post-Puranic poetical literature referred to in our last essay are taken by Chaitanya and his disciples as so much history and appealed to in their teachings. All

this was possible when education was exclusively literary, when even Logic and Philosophy were studied as a body of truths to be accepted on authority. But only about half a century of liberal education, largely scientific, teaching at any rate how to distinguish between dogma and reasoned truth, between fact and fancy, between history and poetry, has effected a revolution in the religious attitude of those who have received the blessings of such an education. They see that they must reject the old theology as based on mere poetry, or if they are to retain it in any shape, they must interpret the legends invented by the poets as allegorical representations of spiritual truths much in the same way as present-day Christians are interpreting the gospel narratives after science and historical criticism have taken away much of them that was formerly believed as true. Gravely questioning whether the story of an unholy love can be thus interpreted with any show of reason and without serious injury to the moral life of those who would accept such an interpretation, we yet do not deny the right of thus interpreting the Rádhá-Krishna story to those who are disposed to undertake it. But one thing we are most anxious to emphasise, and that is that neither the authors of the Puranas nor their latter-day exponents and followers, including Chaitanya and his disciples, *offer even the slightest clue to such an interpretation.* In the books we have already dealt with and those we are going to refer to, we see nowhere the remotest suggestion that Krishna's dealings with Rádhá and the other



Gopís, so realistically narrated in the Puranas and post-Puranic Vaishnava literature, are in fact nothing but the dealings of the Universal Spirit with the finite spirit. Real believers in Vaishnavism like those we have named and those who owe allegiance to them accept the whole Brindábana-lílá, with all its details, as pure history and not as an allegory of the spiritual life. In fact, the spiritual and the sensuous are not and cannot be sharply distinguished by those who conceive God as having a human shape and human passions and appetites. That they were not so distinguished by Chaitanya and his disciples, will be evident from the following sketch of their teachings on *Bhakti*.

The most popular life of Chaitanya is that by Krishnadas Kaviraj, a disciple of Rupa Gosvámín, one of Chaitanya's immediate followers. It is a Bengali book in verse, interspersed with Sanskrit quotations and original stanzas in Sanskrit. From it it is clear that in his pre-*sannyasa* days Chaitanya was a worshipper of the image of Vishnu, and not that of Krishna, and was deeply influenced by the Vedantism which prevailed in his days in scholarly circles at Nadia. The monistic ecstasies (*'mahábháva'*) which formed such a prominent feature of his early life,—ecstasies in which he identified himself with God—can only be thus explained. His acceptance of initiation into the anchorite's life from a monk of the Sankarite school in preference to Vaishnava monks also shows the same influence. But the Rádhá-Krishna cult gradually gained upon him and ultimately found in him its most powerful

exponent and successful reviver. In his conversation with Ray Ramananda, Governor of the Godavari district, he appears to be yet a learner of the doctrine. But in his lectures to Rupa and Sanátana he has risen to the position of a teacher. These two disciples of his were learned and wealthy men who left their ministerships of the then Nabab of Bengal and joined him as mendicants, attracted by his piety and believing him to be a fresh incarnation of Krishna. Chaitanya instructed them in the details of his theology and entrusted them with the task of embodying his views in systematic works on Vaishnava devotions and practical life. His own writings are confined to a few Sanskrit verses of great beauty, but giving expression only to some broad truths of religion. The theology which Chaitanya imparts to Rupa and Sanátana is the same as we find in the later Puranas, with all its legendary and amorous matter, and without any attempt at expurgation or explanation. His *Bhakti* teachings,—substantially the same as Rámánanda's, and evidently not their own creation, but received by them from earlier Vaishnavas, are in brief the well-known classification of piety into the five emotions or attitudes named *sánta*, *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vátsalya* and *mádhurya*, the first illustrated by the earliest Vaishnavas like Sanaka and Sanatkumára, who knew nothing of the Brindá-bana-lílá, and the latter by well-known persons in the later Krishna legend,—*dāsya* or service by men like Uddhava, *sakhya* or friendship by the young *Gopa* companions of Krishna, *vátsalya* or filial attachment

by Krishna's parents and foster-parents, and *mādhurya* or sweetness by his wives and mistresses, pre-eminently by Rādhā. These are said to be men's models in their endeavours after cultivating love to Krishna. Rādhā's love for Krishna—the highest model for a *Bhakta* according to this teaching—is an unceasing desire to meet Krishna and not so much to enjoy him as to make him happy by giving him her company. Both of them are said to be intensely enamoured of each other's beauty and loveliness—excellences which are expressed mostly in terms of physical charms. Their enjoyment of each other's company is also described in terms of the union of a man and a woman. Besides Krishna's personal charms, the sweetness of his lute is so great that it—

সবা মাতোয়াল করি                      বলাৎকারে আনে ধরি

বিশেষতঃ যুবতীর গণে ।

ধ্বনী বড় উদ্ধত,

পতিব্রতার ভাঙ্গে ব্রত

পতিকোল হৈতে টানি আনে ॥

বৈকুণ্ঠের লক্ষীগণে,

যেই করে আকর্ষণে

তার আগে কেবা গোপীগণে ।

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লোকধর্ম লঙ্ঘ্যায়,

সব জ্ঞান লুপ্ত হয়

এছে নাচায় সব নারীগণে ॥

That is—"Intoxicates all and forcibly brings them, specially young women, to Krishna. The sound is very bold, it makes a wife unfaithful to her husband and drags her from his embrace. That which attracts

even the Lakshmís from their Heavens, what are the *Gopís* to it ? It so maddens women, that it makes them give up social virtues, modesty and fear, and drowns all sense. (*Chaitanya-charitamrita*, *Madhya-lila*. Chap. XXI).

The asterisks mark a passage which would offend not only the taste, but even the moral sense of the reader if it were extracted. However, Chaitanya was a pure-hearted ascetic and did nothing in his life that may account for the moral degradation which has overtaken the sect founded by him. But his theology—his idea of God as an embodied being unceasingly thirsting after enjoying the charms of a woman, and his ideal of a *bhakta* as a woman ever seeking to make her lover happy by giving him the pleasure of union with her—can it ever save any church from moral corruption ?

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## XVII. What Chaitanya Taught

We may as well give a few more particulars about Chaitanya and his teachings. He was born on the Phálguní-Purnimá day of the Saka era 1407, corresponding to the Christian year 1486. The event is celebrated with more or less *eclat* at all important centres of Vaishnava influence in Bengal, specially at Nadia, the place of his birth, and at Dháká-dakshin, a village or cluster of villages about ten miles from Sylhet, from which his father came and settled at Nadia. The site of the ancestral house still remains and is adorned with a temple containing an image of Chaitanya. The Misras, Chaitanya's people, are to be found in hundreds in and about the village and devoutly honour his memory. The history of his life is well-known and need not detain us here. His conversion to the new school of Vaishnavism seems to have begun from his joining the little party of devotees who used to meet at the house of Srivása every evening for *sankírtana*. Even this party seems to have rather slowly felt its way to the new form. The prevalent form at Nadia was the old one, and Chaitanya's exposition of his views about the time of his *sanyása* or renunciation of family life and immediately after it shows that he still clung to the old school. This exposition is to be found (1) in his conversation with his wife, Vishnupriyá, just before his renunciation. (2) his controversy with Sárvaabhauma Ácharya of Puri and (3) the account of his meeting the follow-

ers of Sankara at Benares. In these expositions he shows himself to be a follower of Rámánuja, though he does not name that philosopher. In them he admits clearly that God is formless, pure intelligence, in his essential nature, but he adds that by his creative power he has assumed form,—the form of the world. God's creative power, according to him, is not a power of producing illusive appearances. The world is as real as God himself and the finite self is also real as an integral part of God. A Mâyávádi interpretation of creation is possible, but Chaitanya sets aside Mâyáváda and explains it from the standpoint of Parínámaváda. As we have already said, before his *sanyāsa* Chaitanya often used to have fits of monistic ecstasy and identified himself for a time with the Supreme Being and his supposed incarnation, Krishna. When these moods passed away, he taught and moved as an ordinary man. This reminds one of what is said in the *Mahābhārata* of Krishna. In the *Bhagavadgītā* he identifies himself with God, but in the *Anugītā*, when Arjuna asks him to repeat what he had said in the former, he says he has lost the *yogic* mood in which he had uttered what is contained therein and therefore cannot repeat what he then said. Chaitanya's followers, however, take his occasional monistic moods as proofs of his being the incarnation of God in a full and special sense. However, the Vedantic influence on Chaitanya gradually waned after his renunciation, and he by and by felt his way to the new form. One important point in the new

doctrine is adherence to the *Gopí* companions of Rádhá. She has eight chief companions,—Lalitá, Bisákhá, Kanakamanjarí &c.,—who must be adored and closely followed, for it is only they who can lead men to Krishna. The highest goal of worshippers is, if they are males, to become females after death and be presented to Krishna as objects of enjoyment. Chaitanya's appreciation of this form of Vaishnavism is to be found in his conversation with Ráy Rámánanda of Orissa and those with his followers, Rupa and Sanátana. Chaitanya has set the highest example of impassioned love for God of which the emotionally rich Bengali nature is capable. In this respect he will ever remain our ideal. His idea of God, inspite of its Puranic limitations, must have been that of a Being of perfect love and loveliness. But there is a tendency in certain quarters to explain away his errors and represent him as holding religious views in harmony with the most up-to-date liberalism. A close and unbiased study of his teachings will, we fear, give a rude shock to such an uncritical reverence. However, we shall close by giving some of his highest teachings, such as will ever be valued by all lovers of true religion.

As we have already said, Chaitanya has left no literary work behind him except eight Sanskrit stanzas of great beauty. They are called the 'Sikshá Slokas', and contain the gist of his higher teachings. Happily only one of them, the last, refers to the Rádhá-Krishna cult, which represents his doctrinal teachings. The

rest give expression to his spiritual ideals. The following embodies his ideal of the devotee,—of fitness for singing the praise of God :—

वृणादपि सुनीचेन तरोरपि सह्यन्तुमा ।

अमानिना मानदेन कीर्तनीयः यदा हरिः ॥

That is, “The praise of God is to be sung by one who is more modest than grass, more patient than a tree, and who does not covet honour for himself, but gives honour to others.” The metaphors are very apt. The grass does not protest even though trodden over, and a tree patiently submits to be struck and cut off even by those whom it helps with its shade and fruits. *Sankīrtana*, singing the praise of God, was the form of divine worship which Chaitanya preferred to all others and made popular by his teaching and example. Its effects on the human heart are graphically described in the following stanza, which, both in its form and matter, may be pronounced sublime :—

चतोदपंश-मार्ज्जनं भवमहादावाग्नि-निर्व्यापणं ।

श्रेयः करैवचन्द्रिकावितरणं विद्यावधूजोवनम् ॥

आनन्दान्धुधिवह्नेन प्रतिपदं पूर्णामृतास्वादनं ।

सर्वोत्थानं परं विजयते श्रीकृष्ण-सङ्कोर्तनम् ॥

That is, “Singing the praise of Krishna cleanses the mirror of the heart, extinguishes the great forest-fire of worldly life and sheds on the soul the moon-light of the supreme good ; it is the life of the goddess of wisdom (i. e. without it the knowledge of God cannot live) ; it swells the ocean of joy, brings, at every



step, a full taste of nectar, gives rest to all souls, and achieves a complete victory." If Chaitanya emphasised one thing more than another, it was the fervency of divine worship. Worship without fervent feeling is no worship. A worship of mere words and thoughts misses the very object of worship, namely, putting the human soul into its proper attitude of love and reverence towards God. When this attitude is realised, it is manifested outwardly in streams of tears, in a choked voice, and in the hairs of the body standing erect. When, perhaps, such manifestations of feeling were rare in his life, Chaitanya prayed,—

नयनं गलदश्रुधारया वदनं गद्गदहृदया गिरा ।

पूलकैर्निश्चितं वपूः कदा तव नामग्रहणे भविष्यति ॥

That is, "O Lord, when will the uttering of thy name make my eyes shed streams of tears, choke my voice and make the hairs of my body stand erect?" When this prayer was answered, and the intense joy of the Lord's presence was enjoyed by him, a temporary removal of that presence made him exclaim :—

शूगायितं निमेषेण चक्षूषा प्रादुषायितं ।

गुन्यायितं जगत्सर्वं गोविन्दविरहेन मे ॥

That is, "Owing to my separation from God a moment seems a cycle to me, my eyes resemble the rainy season and the whole world appears to be a blank" The joy of the Lord's presence seems never to have been described by Chaitanya. A most natural modesty, common to all intense love, human or divine,

makes all true devotees silent on the matter. On the contrary, Chaitanya's life is characterised throughout by expressions of intense sorrow at his separation from God,—expressions which bear unmistakable witness to the joy of divine communion felt by him. His ideal of such communion was represented by the figure of Rádhá and Krishna in constant association. He believed in the historic reality of such association, but nevertheless his spirit rose above the mere imagery of this representation. No mere sensuous imagery can elicit such outbursts of feeling as were seen in his life. Nothing but the Infinite Beauty can make such exaltation possible. Even Ráy Rámánanda, who taught Chaitanya the mysteries of Rádhá-Krishna worship, and believed in the truth of the current legends, seems to have translated the Puranic representation of Rádhá and Krishna, in his personal *sádhana*, into the realities of the spiritual life as conceived by him. This appears from the eighth chapter of the *Madhyalíla* of the *Chaitanya Charitámrita*. But the figure, in its realistic implication, gained upon successive generations of Bengali Vaishnavas and proved disastrous to their religion and their community. It is a solemn warning to all present-day teachers of religion.

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## XVIII. Conclusion.

We shall conclude this series of essays by briefly referring to Rupa Goswami's *Bhaktirasāmritasindhu* mentioned more than once in our last essays and drawing a few lessons from the history of Vaishnavism we have given. The imposing title of the book just named, which means the 'ocean of the nectar of *bhakti*,' raises expectations in the mind of the intending reader that its study would be a real "feast of reason and flow of soul," that at any rate it would lead us some way to the deeper regions of *bhakti*. But really, when one has gone through it, it reminds one of Paramhansa Ramkrishna's saying that when you have strained a book on *bhakti*, you will not get a drop of it there. We do not know why it should be so when the writer is a real *bhakta* and has the gift of expression in him. Rupa Goswami has the reputation for both. But for some reason or other we have failed to reap any harvest worth the name from the vast field through which he has led us. The reason may be the shallowness and unappreciativeness of our heart. But the more probable explanation perhaps is that his ideas of God and the nature of the love and reverence due to him from man are hopelessly opposed to ours. What we really appreciate in him is his close and thorough study of the Vaishnava literature which preceded his time, a study which has filled his book with

apt quotations at every stage, and his power of minute division and classification not always based, it seems, on real distinctions, so far as our knowledge of Logic and Psychology goes. His book is, more than anything else, an analysis of man's religious feelings, in fact all the feelings that arise from his contemplation of God, specially of God's supposed incarnation as Krishna, including the feelings of those who were opposed to Krishna. So far as our author enumerates the characteristics of *bhakti* in general, and its result on man's life and character, without special reference to the Krishna legend, he somewhat carries us with him. But the bulk of his book refers to the legend and the numerous characters in it, male and female. And this reference is tinged with all the objectionable features of later Vaishnavism that we have mentioned in our concluding essays. We therefore refrain from discussing *bhakti* with our author. He only expounds at great length, with his wealth of expression, classification and illustration, the ideas of God and the love due to him which he has derived from his great master, Chaitanya, whose teachings we have already given in our last two essays. One only point we may mention in passing. It is the character of Krishna. Besides Krishna's personal charms, our author dwells at length on the supposed excellences of his character. But here he is at an obvious disadvantage. The picture of Krishna drawn by his predecessors belies his enumeration of his moral excellences. And our author has himself only a poor idea of such excellences. A single illustra-

tion will suffice. He says Krishna was *hrīmān*, modestly shy before elders, and he gives an illustration of this virtue in Krishna which it is difficult even to mention fully without offending the reader's good taste. When Krishna was holding the Gobardhana hill over the Gopas and Gopīs of Brindābana, and the latter had crowded round him, he happened to notice the fulness of a certain part of their bodies, and this made his hand, and the hill with it, shake a little, so that the Gopas got afraid and began to pray for safety. Balarāma marked the cause which had disturbed for a moment the composure of his brother's heart, and smiled. Krishna noticed this and cast down his face in shame. This passing reference to our author's method of dealing with his subject, a reference which we make rather reluctantly, will show to our readers that it is not merely the poverty of our spiritual nature which makes it impossible for us to appreciate the merits of the *Bhaktirasāmritasindhu*.

Now, what are the lessons which we learn from the history of the origin and development of Vaishnavism we have given in these essays? The first lesson is that mere Poetry, however exalted, cannot take the place of real religion. The early Vaishnavas set up an imaginary person as a rival of Buddha, a man of real goodness and spiritual penetration. If the fancied picture of Krishna had contained real excellences, it might have done some good. A high ideal, even though not actually realised in a person, helps us not a little in our onward progress. Historical criticism

has now greatly obscured the image of Jesus drawn in the gospels, but it has done a great work for centuries. But the picture of Krishna in the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas, specially in the later Puranas, was drawn by men who were rather poets than pious men and had very wrong notions of morality. And now, whatever good Vaishnava poetry may have done in the past, when it was believed as history and religion, it is being found out as mere poetry, without any historical or spiritual foundation. There must indeed be poetry, deep and fervid poetry, in religion. But that poetry must be founded on fact, on realities perceived by the soul and verified by Philosophy. Religion must fire the imagination, or else it is not real religion; but the religious imagination must follow and interpret, and not anticipate, spiritual insight. The second lesson we learn from Vaishnavism is that *bhakti* cannot be based on a purely monistic philosophy. We have seen that the real religion of the early Vaishnavas was Vedantism of the Sankarite type. They tried to avoid its extremes by emphasising the world-form—*visva-rupa*—of God, but as they had not a philosophical grasp of the reality of *difference* and of the moral purpose of the world-order, they slipped into *Máyaváda* in their more contemplative moods and saw no higher destiny for the individual self than its merging in the Universal. The later Vaishnavas lost even the Vedantic insight into unity, had really no philosophy higher than popular Dualism, and necessarily fell into idolatry. Such must be the fate

of all religions, by whatever high names they may call themselves, that have not a sound philosophy at their basis, a philosophy harmonising the unity of the Absolute with the plurality which characterises the physical and the spiritual world. The third and last but by no means the least important lesson which Vaishnavism teaches us is that deep and fervent *bhakti* can be inspired and kept up only by a vision of the Beautiful and the Sweet. The later Vaishnavas saw this, but by 'beauty' they understood only the beauty of form, the form of the human body, and by 'sweetness' only the feelings connected with the satisfaction of animal instincts. We cannot say they had no idea of the beauty of character, but their ethical ideas were of the crudest and vaguest form and they somehow or other conceived of God, even an incarnate God, as above moral restrictions. Morality belongs, they seem to have thought, only to the beginning of the religious life, and not to its higher flights. You need to be moral so that you may know God and devote yourself to him ; but when you have once done so, you leave morality behind, and have henceforth nothing but *Ananda*, joy, to seek and dive into. This is a most fatal mistake for a religion to make. Morality—ethical relation between the subject and object of worship, and between the worshippers themselves—is of the very essence of religion. When religion outgrows ethicality and thinks it has assumed the highest form possible for it, it really ceases to be religion. Religion, as we have already suggested, is a relation, a relation

of the relatively good with the supremely Good. When you try to get rid of this relation by merging yourself in the Absolute by metaphysical abstraction, or by making God a mere means of your own enjoyment or making yourself the means of his enjoyment, you lose the very essence of religion and reduce it to irreligion. Religion, to remain true religion, must always seek the Perfect—the perfectly True, the perfectly Good and the perfectly Beautiful. And it must always be remembered that the perfection of the Absolute implies the real existence of the imperfect as an object of his love and care. Deny the real existence of the latter, and the former loses all meaning whatever. The Monist, both of the ancient Sankarite and the modern Bradley-Bosanquet type, thus reduces the Absolute to an abstraction and makes his so-called perfection meaningless. The Vaishnavas and those who are now following in their footsteps virtually deny the Perfect by obliterating all moral distinctions whatever and representing the Absolute as incessantly thirsting after enjoyment. The Bráhma Samáj, in its attempts to evolve and shape the religion of the future, must steer its ship most cautiously and avoid these opposite dangers. The way lies through a clear vision of the moral purpose of life as a whole,—of individual, domestic, social, religious and political life—and feeling after an ideal of perfect character, an all-round perfection,—a perfection of which God is the complete embodiment and which he is striving to impart to us through all our struggles and endeavours.



## APPENDIX

### The Krishna of the Mahabharata and the Puranas\*

Krishna was born in Mathurá at midnight on the Krishná Ashatamí day of the month of Bhâdra. His father was Vasudeva, of the Yadu race, and his mother, Devakí, daughter of Devaka, brother of Ugrasena, king of Mathurá. Kamsa, the issue of an illicit connection of Ugrasena's wife with Drumila, the Dánava king of Saubha, imprisoned Ugrasena and usurped the throne of Mathurá. Having heard from Nárada or *daivavānī*, a voice from heaven, that his cousin Devakí's eighth child would kill him, he imprisoned both her and her husband, and killed six of their children as they were born one after another. The seventh child, Balaráma, was miraculously transferred from Devakí's womb to that of Rohiní, another wife of Vasudeva. When the eighth child, Krishna, was born, he was secretly borne by his father to the other side of the Yamuná, where Nanda Gopa and his wife Yasodá, natives of Braja, were then living. The Yamuná rolled back her waters to make way for the divine child, and Ananta, the chief of serpents, protected him with his ample hood from the heavy torrent

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\* Condensed from Lecture II of the author's *Krishna and the Gítá*.

of rain that was then falling. By a previous arrangement, Vasudeva exchanged his son for Nanda's newly born daughter, Yoganidrā or Mahāmāyā, and presented the latter to Kamsa as his eighth child, but she flew away, telling him that he who would kill him was being brought up by Nanda and Yasodā. This led Kamsa to make a series of unsuccessful attempts to kill the child. With this object he sent to Braja a number of *asuras* in various forms. The killing of these *asuras* and a number of other heroic deeds, impossible for an ordinary human child, are the chief staple of the Puranic account of Krishna's early life. Some of them are mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* also. As might be expected, the authorities differ largely in their narration of these feats. I mention only some of them, following chiefly the later authorities.

The first or one of the first of these is the killing of Putanā. She was Kamsa's nurse, and was sent by him to kill Krishna in the form of a female vulture according to the *Harivamsa*, and of a beautiful woman according to the *Bhāgavata*. As she, pretending to suckle Krishna, put her poisoned breast into his mouth, he sucked it so powerfully as to draw out her very life-blood, so that she fell down with an yell and died.

Krishna performed another of these feats when he was only three months old. It was the breaking of a *sakuta*, a cart which was used as a cup-board and had several jars and pans, full of milk and

curd, ranged on it. According to the *Harivamsa* Sakata was an *asura* sent by Kamsa and had entered the cart intending to crush the infant Krishna by its weight. However, Yasodá had placed the boy under the cart and gone to bathe in the Yamuná. On her return she was told that he had kicked against it and broken it to pieces with all that lay on it. This event surprised and frightened Yasodá, and she offered *pújás* to avert the evils threatened by it.

Now, Putaná and Sakata's attempts to kill Krishna having failed, Kamsa sent another of his emissaries, an *asura* named Trinávarta, to attempt the same task. He came in the form of a bird and carried aloft the divine child, then only a year old. But he soon dropped down dead, with the child safe and holding his throat tightly.

The next feat was the breaking of two *arjuna* trees growing side by side. They are described as the bodies of two *yakshas* who had been converted into this form by a curse, and who were released by this feat of Krishna. When he had learnt to crawl about and could hardly be kept out of mischief, Yasodá tied him with a rope to a wooden mortar and went to mind her household duties. When she was out of sight, Krishna began to drag the mortar after him till it stuck fast between the trees. Still pulling the heavy weight after him, he uprooted the trees and made them fall down with a tremendous noise, himself remaining unhurt by them.

Now, these events filled Nanda with fear, and he seriously thought of leaving Braja and moving to another settlement. While he was thus thinking, the place was infested with wolves which made great havoc among the cattle and made it quite unsafe. This fixed the wavering intention of the nomads and they moved with all their belongings to the pleasant woodland named Brindábana. Krishna was then only seven years old.

After his removal to this new settlement Krishna killed quite a large number of *asuras*. One of them was Aristha, who came in the form of a bull; another, Kesin, who was disguised as a horse. Five others were Batsásura, Bakásura, Aghásura, Bomásura, and Sankhachura, the last a *yaksha*. More important than these was Káliya, a snake chief, who lived with his family in a whirlpool of the Yamuná and thus poisoned its water. Krishna one day threw himself on Káliya's hood and danced so wildly as to make him vomit blood. He would thus have killed him, but on the intervention of the snake's family he spared him and allowed him to move away to another abode.

The subjugation of Káliya was followed by *vastra-harana*, the carrying away of clothes, a hard nut to crack for worshippers and admirers of the Puranic Krishna. 'The whole narration is so obscene, that even the merest outlines will, I fear, be felt to be indelicate. But I must give them in as decent a form as is possible, to make my brief account of Krishna's doings as full as I can. Some Gopís had

dived into the waters of the 'Yamuná for a bath, leaving their clothes on the banks, as is said to be still the custom in some parts of the country. Krishna seized the clothes and with them climbed upon a tree on the riverside. When asked to return them, he refused to do so unless the women approached the tree and each begged her own dress for herself. When they did so, the clothes were returned. Now, this story is found only in the *Bhāgavata*, which gives it a religious significance, one which I have neither the wish nor the patience to expound.

The next of Krishna's feats was the uplifting of the Gobardhana Hill. The Gopas were about to celebrate their annual sacrifice to Indra, the god of rain, and began to make grand preparations for it. Krishna pointed out to them that as they were a pastoral and not an agricultural tribe, their real gods were kine, hills and woods, and them only should they worship, and not such gods as the rain-giving Indra. The Gopas were convinced, and giving up their intention of worshipping Indra, celebrated a grand sacrifice to the hill Gobardhana, the nourisher of kine, accompanied with feasting and dancing. Indra was, as he could not but be, greatly enraged at this affront offered to him, and as punishment, he poured rain on the Gopa settlement for seven days and nights continually. Krishna, nothing daunted, uprooted the hill and held it up as an umbrella over the settlement and thus protected the Gopas and their cattle from the ruinous effects of Indra's wrath.

I now come to that part of Krishna's youthful career which has seemed to all the most difficult to be defended, namely his dealings with the young women of Brindábana, specially what is called his *rāsallā*. Rāsa is a sort of circular dance in which the hands of the dancers, men and women, are joined together. It is said to be still prevalent among some of the wild tribes of this country. Krishna, it is stated, was in the habit of often enjoying this dance with the young Gopís of Brindábana, who loved him passionately. One of these dances is described in the *Vishnu Purāna*, the *Harivamsa*, and the *Bhāgavata*. All these authorities interpret the Gopís' love for Krishna as piety—love to God, and see nothing wrong in their amorous dealings with him,—dealings which, in the case of any other person, would be highly reprehensible according to their own admission. All agree as to the general character of the affair—the scene, the time and season, the drawing of the women with sweet music, the dance, the amorous feelings of the women for Krishna, and their expression in various ways.

I now come to Krishna's career as a regular warrior and politician, a career which began, we are told, when he was in his twelfth year. His first act in this part of his life was the assassination of his maternal uncle Kamsa. Having heard of Krishna's youthful feats at Brindábana, Kamsa got frightened and determined to secure his death by confronting him with a great athlete in an open exhibition of arms. Accordingly he announced the celebration of a

*dhanuryajna*, a bow sacrifice, and invited Krishna, Balaráma and their Gopa friends to it. Akrura, an adherent of Krishna, but an officer of Kamsa, was deputed by the latter to bring the brothers to Mathurá. They came, determined to kill Kamsa. He had provoked not only them, but other Yádavas also, whom his persecution had compelled to leave Mathurá. The brothers were therefore supported by a conspiracy against him. Having arrived at Mathurá, they desired to change their simple Gopa dress for a more decent one, and asked for clothes from Kamsa's washerman, whom they met in the streets. As the man behaved insolently with them, they killed him and took from his stock whatever clothes they liked. They then met Kubjá, a hunch-backed woman who served as Kamsa's perfumer. At their request she anointed them with sandal paste and in return was cured by Krishna of her bodily deformity. The *Bhágavata* makes him visit her on a subsequent occasion and describes his union with her with its characteristic indecency. However, on the present occasion, the brothers, anointed by Kubjá and garlanded by Sudámá, a flower-seller, entered the place of sacrifice and broke the great bow to which the sacrifice was to be offered. The frightened Kamsa sent an elephant named Kuvalaya-pída to kill them. Krishna killed the elephant and entered the arena. There the brothers encountered Kamsa's chosen athletes, Chánura, Mushtika, Toshalaka and Andhra. Krishna killed Chánura and Toshalaka and Balaráma the other two. Frustrated in his plan

of securing Krishna's death by stratagem, Kamsa ordered the brothers and their Gopa friends to be turned out and banished from his kingdom, their herds to be confiscated and Vasudeva, Nanda, and his own father Ugrasena to be assassinated. At this Krishna got upon the platform on which Kamsa was seated, and seizing him by the hair, threw him down on the ground and killed him. Having consoled Kamsa's weeping wives, he ordered a royal cremation for him, and refusing the kingdom offered him by Ugrasena, installed the latter on the throne and invited his banished relatives to return to Mathurá.

After this, Krishna and Balaráma were initiated by the sage Garga and went for a course of instruction to Sándipani, a sage of Avantípur. At the end of their school career, they rescued their teacher's son from Panchajana, a sea-monster by whom he had been carried away. Panchajana was killed by Krishna and his conch 'Páñchajanya' was ever after used by him.

We next find Krishna fighting with Jarásandha, emperor of Magadha, and Kálavána, a Saka or Scythian invader. If there is any historicity in these narrations, they are no doubt reminiscences of the Greek invasions and the conquests of the Mauryan emperors, and cannot refer to more ancient periods of our history. To the remote ancients Magadha, even when known, was a non-aryan kingdom outside the limits of Hindu civilisation. But Jarásandha, as described in our books, is a Kshatriya emperor and a



devout worshipper of the Aryan gods. However, enraged by Krishna's assassination of Kamsa, his son-in-law, Jarásandha, is said to have invaded Mathurá seventeen times and to have been every time repulsed by Krishna. Fearing, however, that an eighteenth invasion would be disastrous to the city, he removed the Yádavas to Dváraká at the west end of the Guzrat Peninsula. This may be a poetical version of a real emigration of a band or bands of people from the banks of the Yamuná to Guzrat. However, after the removal of the Yádavas from Mathurá, the city was besieged by Kálayavana, who came, at the instigation of Jarásandha, with a vast army of Sakas, Parthians, Khasas and other hillmen. While pursuing the unarmed Krishna, however, out of the city, the invader was burnt to ashes by fire issuing from the eyes of king Muchakunda, who had been sleeping in a mountain cave, and whom he had awakened with a kick, mistaking him for Krishna. This Muchakunda is a Hindu version of Rip Van Winkle, but a much more profound sleeper than his American prototype, for it is said that he had been sleeping ever since the Tretáyuga, when he had laid himself down in the cave, exhausted by his wars with the enemies of the Aryan gods. However, Krishna defeated the Mlechchha army, but while flying to Dváraká with the booty, he was overtaken by Jarásandha. He, however, evaded, his enemy by climbing a hill and flying to Dváraká after jumping down from it.

Krishna was now, for the first time, married. He

married Rukminí, daughter of Bhishmaka, king of Vidarbha. Her father, at Jarásandha's advice, was making preparations to get her married to Sishupála, Krishna's cousin and king of Chedi. But Krishna carried her off on the day before the proposed marriage: The *Bhágavata* says she had fallen in love with Krishna and had addressed a love-letter to him. However, Rukminí was gradually followed by an enormously vast army of co-wives till the number of Krishna's consorts rose to sixteen thousand one hundred and eight. His children numbered one lac and eighty thousand. The chief of his wives were the well-known eight, Rukminí, Satyabhámá, Jámavatí, Kálindí, Mitrabindá, Satyá, Bhadrá and Lakshmaná. The remaining sixteen thousand and one hundred were married to him on the same day. They belonged originally to the harem of king Naraka of Prágjyotish, whom Krishna defeated and killed at the invitation of Indra, whose mother's ear-rings had been carried away by Nāraka. While paying a visit after the battle to Indra's heaven in company with Satyabhámá, this lady took a fancy to Indra's famous *párijata* tree. To oblige his wife, Krishna had to fight with the god whom he had just favoured. Indra, though the chief of the Vedic gods, and though helped by the latter on this occasion, was indeed no match for the 'incarnation of the Supreme Being' and was forced to part with his favourite flower-tree, which was thus carried to Dváraká and planted there. However, before I narrate the other feats and achievements of Krishna I shall tell you briefly

how he obtained his chief eight wives. I have already said how he got Rukminí. Satyabhámá was the daughter of Satrájit, a Yádava chief who gave her away in marriage to Krishna because he was afraid of him and wished to buy his favour. Jámavatí was the daughter of Jámaván, a bear chief, against whom Krishna waged a long war to recover a precious gem he had taken away from a Yádava. Jámaván was defeated and presented his daughter to Krishna as a peace-offering. Káлиндì went through a series of austerities in order to get Krishna as her husband and her devotion was rewarded by the marriage she had sought. Mitrabindú was a cousin of Krishna and was carried off by him from the *svayambara* grounds. Satyá was the daughter of Nagnajit, king of Ayodhyá, and was won by Krishna when he had achieved a brave feat of arms, namely killing a number of naughty bulls belonging to Nagnajit. Bhadrá was another cousin of Krishna and was married by him in the usual way. Lakshmaná was the daughter of Brihatsena, king of Madra and was carried off by him from the *svayambara* grounds. The *Vishnu Purána* ascribes a feeling of self-depreciation to the 'incarnation of the Deity' on account his polygamy. When the question as to who should wear the precious gem 'Syamantaka' came to be discussed at an assembly of the Yádavas, Krishna said that it could be worn only by a holy man, or else the wearer would be destroyed. He declared that he himself was unfit to wear it on account of his taking so many wives. He declared Akrura alone as worthy

of wearing it. From what is said of Akrura in the books, he seems to have been far from possessing the holiness thus ascribed to him. The story of the gem 'Syamantaka,' which I now proceed to narrate briefly, will partly illustrate what I say. Satrájit got it from the sun. Krishna thought it should be worn by a better man, but Satrájit refused to part with it. Prasena, Satrájit's brother, while hunting with the gem on him, was killed by a lion. Jámaván, the bear chief, killed the lion and carried it off to his den. But the Yádavas thought Krishna had killed Prasena for the sake of the gem. They seem to have had no faith in his divinity, or had strange notions of the divine character. Krishna recovered the gem, in the way I have already related, and returned it to Satrájit. Satrájit, as I have already said was afraid of Krishna, and bought his favour by offering him Satyabhámá. This, however, offended Akrura, Kritavarmá, Satadhanvá and other Yádavas who had sought the lady's hand. They conspired against Satrájit, and Satadhanvá killed him and took possession of the gem. To avenge his father-in-law's murder, Krishna killed Satadhanvá, but could not find the gem with him, as he had secretly given it to Akrura. Balaráma, however, thought that Krishna had the gem but did not confess this. Krishna might have exclaimed with Cæsar—"Et tu Brute?" However, Akrura, in order to avert detection and violence, began to perform a long series of *yajnas*, for a Kshatriya engaged in sacrifices was equal to a Bráhmaṇa and could not be killed. But Krishna found him out and on Akrura's

confession allowed the gem to remain with him in the way I have already stated. With himself he pronounced Balarāma to be unfit to wear it, as he was addicted to drinking. Satyabhāmā, whose desire for Indra's *pārijāta* had led Krishna to wage war against that god, was this time denied the satisfaction of getting the gem, even though she claimed it as her father's property.

Krishna's next feat was his fight with Vāna, the thousand-armed king of Sonitapur. Krishna's grandson, Aniruddha, had secretly married Vāna's daughter, Ushā, and was living with her. Vāna, being informed of this, imprisoned him. Krishna marched against Vāna, and in the course of the fight that ensued, cut off his arms. His god, Siva, intervened and saved his life. Krishna returned to Dvārakā with Aniruddha and Ushā. All's well that ends well.

The next important event was the killing of Paundra, king of Karusha, to which I have already referred in my first lecture. Killing seems to be the most divine act in the eyes of our Purāna-writers,—one which proves divinity more than any other act. And this killing of Paundra was a specially divine act, since the fellow not only denied Krishna's divinity, but assumed Vishnu's fourfold insignia,—the conch, the quoit, the club and the lotus, and declared himself to be the real Vāsudeva. He is also said by one authority to have invaded Dvārakā. In the fight that ensued he showed great bravery, but was at length overpowered and killed by Krishna. Another account

makes Krishna himself proceed to Paundra's capital in response to his challenge to return to him the insignia, and kill him by throwing them upon him. This was perhaps a more godlike procedure than the former. We next find Krishna at Panchála, where he went to attend Draupadí's *svayambara*. He stopped the fight that followed Arjuna's winning the Panchála princess, declaring to the infuriated Kshatriyas that as Draupadí had been rightfully won, there was no occasion for fighting. When the Pándavas returned with the princess to their temporary quarters in Drupada's capital, Krishna visited them and introduced himself and his brother to them. When they were married, he made them rich presents, and when they were received back into Dhritaráshtra's favour, he helped them to establish themselves as rulers at Indraprastha, and returned to Dvaraká.

The next important event with which Krishna is concerned is Arjuna's marriage with Subhadrá, sister of Balaráma and Krishna's half-sister. In the course of his travels Arjuna arrived at the holy place of Prabhása, and was received by Krishna on the hill of Raivataka. There he was enamoured of Subhadrá and asked Krishna how he could get her. Krishna advised him to carry her off as a brave Kshatriya without depending upon the chances of a *svayambara*, the usual Kshatriya form of marriage. The Yádavas • were at first enraged at this outrage, but when Krishna convinced them that Arjuna would be a very worthy husband for Subhadrá, and that by carrying her off

he had done nothing unworthy of a hero, they consented to the union.

However, we now come to Yudhisthira's Rájasúya and Krishna's removal of two obstructions to it, Jarásandha and Sishupála. Jarásandha had imprisoned a large number of kings and intended to sacrifice them to Rudra. Unless he was killed and the imprisoned princes released and given an opportunity to pay homage to Yudhisthira, the latter's claim as emperor could not be established. Krishna therefore proceeded with Bhíma and Arjuna to Rájagriha, Jarásandha's capital, and challenged him to a single combat with any one of them he might choose. Such a challenge could not be refused by a Kshatriya, and Jarásandha, at the anticipation of death at his opponent's hand declared his son Sahadeva as his heir-apparent and chose Bhíma as his opponent. The combat lasted thirteen days, and Jarásandha at length met with a painful death at his rival's hand. Having put Sahadeva on his father's throne, and invited the released princes to attend Yudhisthira's Rájasúya, Krishna and his friends returned to Indraprastha.

In due course the Rájasúya came off. Of the various functions and duties connected with the ceremony Krishna is said to have taken charge of washing the feet of the Bráhmanas. This is a sure indication of the comparative modernness of the *Mahābhārata*, at any rate, of this story. For in ancient times, even when the supremacy of the Bráhmanas had been established, the Kshatriyas never

paid them any servile honour. However, when the sacrifice was over, the time came for Yndhisthira to make presents to the assembled princes, priests and other persons deserving honour. To whom must honour be paid first? Yudhisthira having asked Bhishma's opinion on the matter, the latter replied that Krishna was the person to be honoured first. Accordingly Sahadeva, at Yudhisthira's command, presented the *arghya*, the mark of honour, to Krishna, and the latter accepted it. This upset Sishupála, who made a long speech, challenging Krishna's right to the honour and abusing the Pándavas for paying and Krishna for accepting it. Bhishma made another speech, narrating Krishna's exploits and achievements at length, and declaring his divinity. Sishupála rose again, rebutted Bhishma's arguments one after another, and grossly abused him. It is pointed out by Krishna's recent biographers, that of the charges brought against Krishna by Sishupála, there is no mention of his dealings with the Brindábana Gopís, a sure indication, according to them, that when the *Mahábhárata* was composed, the story of these dealings of Krishna, a story made so much of by the writers of the Puranas and the later poets, was not conceived. However, at the end of Sishupála's speech, Bhishma, who saw that Yudhisthira was afraid lest Sishupála and his followers might obstruct the completion of the ceremony, said, addressing them, that if they were resolved to die, they might challenge the divine Krishna himself to fight. At this Sishupála challenged Krishna, who rose.



ih response and narrated his opponent's numerous misdeeds. Then with the words, "At the request of his mother, my aunt, I have pardoned a hundred of Sishupála's offences. But I cannot pardon the insulting words he has spoken of me before the assembled princes ; I kill him before you all," he threw his *chakra* at him and cut off his head.

Sishupála's death led to Krishna's war with Sálva, king of Saubha, who, to avenge his friend's death, invaded Dváraká and sacked it in Krishna's absence at Indraprastha. Returning, however, from the Pándava capital, Krishna fought a long fight with Sálva, in the course of which the divine hero was hard pressed and often led into painful errors by his crafty enemy, who is credited by the poet with possessing magical powers. However, he at length fell a victim to the divine *gada* or club.

The club and the quoit accounted for two more enemies, who came to avenge the deaths of Paundra and Sálva. They were Dantabakra and Biduratha, brothers, and related to Krishna as his cousins. They, however, need not detain us.

We meet with Krishna next in the forest where the Pándavas were living with Draupadí after losing their kingdom by the game of dice. He blamed Yudhisthira for having engaged in the game, but consoled him, his brothers and Draupadí with the prediction that their oppressors would meet with deserved punishment, and that they would be restored to the possession of their kingdom. On a second visit

to the forest at Draupadī's request, Krishna performed a miracle. To try the exiled Yudhisthira's resources, the sage Durvāsá came to seek his hospitality with a large number of followers when Draupadī herself had finished her meal and there was nothing to place before the guests. When, however, they went for their bath, Krishna made them feel as if they had had a most hearty meal, and so instead of coming to partake of the meal promised to them, they went their ways, utterly discomfited.

We next find Krishna at the capital of king Viráta, where he went to attend the marriage of his nephew Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son by Subhadrá, with Uttará, daughter of Viráta. After the marriage, he pleaded the cause of the Pándavas at a meeting of the assembled princes. He was not for war, but for peace, even if the Pándavas had to lose half their kingdom for it; but he thought that war and the destruction of Duryodhana's party were inevitable if the claims of the Pándavas were utterly disregarded. He left for Dvāraká with the instruction that if negotiations should fail and war should be declared, invitation to him to join in it should be sent last of all. Negotiations followed on the one hand and preparations for war on the other. Arjuna and Duryodhana having both gone to invite Krishna, he gave them the choice of ten krores of Gopa soldiers, called Náráyana, on the one hand, and his own self as non-combatant charioteer, on the other. Duryodhana chose the soldiers and Arjuna Krishna himself.

Other ambassadors having failed to secure peace, Krishna himself undertook an embassy to Hastināpur. He tried his utmost to persuade Duryodhana to do justice to the Pāṇḍavas, but found him too obstinate and obdurate. Finding war inevitable, he tried to secure Karna to the Pāṇḍavas' side, but failed in this attempt also.

The war broke out. On the first day, as the two armies stood face to face, and Arjuna looked at those with whom he had to fight, the presence of innumerable friends and relatives in the hostile camp,—men whom he must kill or help in killing,—filled him with sadness. He communicated his feelings to Krishna, and weighed down with sorrow and horror at the apparently heinous crime he was going to commit, cast down his arms and sat down on his chariot. What Krishna said to cheer him up, remove his doubts and give him an idea of man's duties, ethical and spiritual, is said to be recorded in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

However, in the course of the war, Krishna is said to have twice broken his promise not to fight. To help Arjuna in his fight with Bhīshma he rushed against the latter with arms and had to be interrupted and pacified by the former. Moreover, he is said to have done a number of objectionable actions, the chief of which are the following. They are all admitted as unrighteous by the poets, but are nevertheless defended as necessary.

1. When Sātyaki, Krishna's friend, was hard pressed by Bhūrisravā, son of Somadatta, Krishna

induced Arjuna to cut off his arms, and thereby made it easy for Sátyaki to kill him.

2. When Abhimanyu was unfairly surrounded and killed by seven Kaurava warriors, Arjuna vowed the death of the ringleader, Jayadratha, next day before sunset, or, failing that, his own death by entering into fire. When the sun was about to set, and Jayadratha remained unslain, Krishna miraculously hid the sun, on which Jayadratha, having come out, Krishna uncovered the sun, and Arjuna killed his enemy.

3. Despairing of Drona being ever killed by fair means, Krishna advised the Pándavas to kill him unfairly. If he could be made to cast down his arms, he could, Krishna said, be killed easily. This could be done if he was told that his son, Asvatthámā was dead. Bhíma tried the suggested devise. He killed an elephant named after Drona's son and told him that Asvattháma was killed. The warrior was somewhat depressed by the news, but did not quite believe it. At this juncture he was hard pressed by a number of sages to cease fighting and prepare himself for heaven with meditations worthy of a Bráhmaṇa. This checked the hero still more and he applied to the truthful Yudhisthira for correct information about his son. Finding Yudhisthira unwilling to tell a lie, Krishna overcame his reluctance by a long exhortation, in the course of which he announced his ethics of untruth in the following edifying text from Vasishtha's Smṛiti:—

“विवाहकाक्षि रतिसंयुधेगि प्राणाख्ये मर्त्यधनापहारे ।

विप्रस्य चार्धं हनृतं वदेत यक्षानृताभ्याधुरपातकानि ॥

That is, "In marriage, in amorous dealings, when one's life is in danger, when the whole of one's possession is going to be lost, and when a Bráhmāna's interest is at stake, untruth should be told. The wise have said that speaking untruth on these five occasions is not a sin." One shudders to think what a blighting effect this dreadful law, sanctioned by one believed to be God incarnate, has had on the morals of the nation. However, Yudhisthira's scruples were stifled, and he said to his preceptor, "Yes, Asvatthámā is killed," adding in a low voice, "that is, an elephant," which last words, however, were not heard by Drona. His depression was complete, and on hearing some bitterly reproachful words from Bhíma, he gave up his arms, and while sitting in a meditative posture, was killed by Dhrishtadyumna.

4. When Bhíma was unsuccessfully fighting with Duryodhana by the side of the Dvaipáyana Lake, Krishna reminded him through Arjuna that he had vowed the breaking of his opponent's thighs. Now, striking a rival below the navel was unfair, but as Duryodhana could not be killed except by such an unfair means, Krishna caused it to be adopted.

Now, I shall barely mention three more deeds of Krishna—and these not bad but good deeds—before I describe the closing scene of his life, his own death and the destruction of his people. At the end of the war Krishna induced Yudhisthira to visit Bhíshma, who was lying on his bed of arrows, and profit by his great wisdom. When he was about to leave Hastinápur

for Dvārakā, Arjuna asked him to repeat the teachings he had imparted to him just before the commencement of the first day's battle. Krishna said he could not then command the state of *yoga* from which he had spoken on the former occasion, and could not therefore say all that he had said. But he would, he said, tell him something to that effect. What he said to Arjuna on this occasion is embodied in the *Anugita*. When Krishna returned to Hastināpur on the occasion of Yudhisthira's Asvamedha, he revived Uttarū's dead child, Parikshit, who had been killed in the womb by Asvatthāmā's *brahmāstra*, divine weapon. Before he left Dvārakā Krishna had done the last of his many heroic deeds,—the killing of Nikumba, a *daitya*. Krishna's son, Pradyumna, had carried off Prabhāvatī, Nikumba's niece, and killed her father, Vajranābha. Nikumba retaliated by carrying off Bhānumatī, daughter of Bhānu, a Yādava. Why should he retaliate? Krishna marched against Nikumba with Arjuna and Pradyumna, killed him and married Bhānumati to Sahadeva, the youngest of the Pāndavas.

And now comes the closing act of the great drama, the destruction of the Yādavas and the death of Krishna. Krishna knew his people well, as he could not but dō, being himself a typical Yādava. In founding his city of Dvārakā, he had taken care to settle thousands of 'unfortunates' there. As the Harivamsa says :

देवाधिवासं निर्जित्य बहुभिर्ददिविष्णवे ।

देव्या निवेष्टिता योर दारवत्तां सद्यजतः ॥

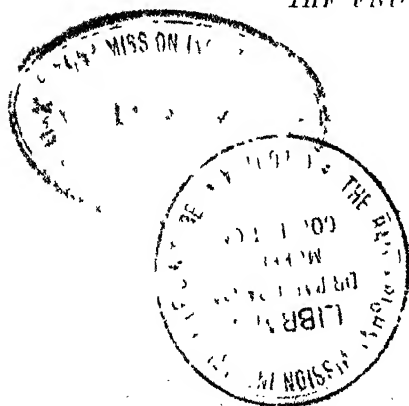
That is, "O hero, having conquered the abodes of the Daityas (giants) with the help of brave Yadus, the Lord settled thousands of public women in Dváraká." These women, it seems, were often had in requisition, as singers and dancers, even by the divine leaders of the people. The poets describe a sea-trip in which these women formed a principal source of enjoyment. Excited by their singing and dancing, the divine brothers took the hands of their respective wives,—fortunately not the wives of other people, like modern Europeans—and joined in the dancing. They were followed by the other Yádava chiefs and by Arjuna and Nárada. Then a fresh excitement was sought. Men and women all fell into the sea and at Krishna's suggestion the gentlemen began a *jalakrtrá*, water-sport, with the ladies, Krishna leading one party and Balaráma another, while the courtesans added to the amusement by their music. This was followed by eating and drinking, and this again by a special musical performance in which the leaders themselves exhibited their respective skill in handling various musical instruments. However, it was in one of these revels,—a drunken revel—that the Yádavas were destroyed. They, it is said, had incurred the displeasure of a number of sages by a childish trick played on the latter by some of their boys. These boys disguised Sám̐ba, one of Krishna's sons, as a woman with child, tying an iron pestle below his navel, and asked the sages to say what child the 'woman' would give birth to. The enraged sages

said 'she' would produce an iron pestle which would be the ruin of the Yádavas. Fearing the worst consequences from this curse, the boys took the pestle to the sea-side and rubbed it away. But its particles came out in the form of *erakas*, a kind of reeds, and its last remaining bit, which had been thrown into the sea, was afterwards recovered and used by a hunter as the point of an arrow. Now, it was with these *erakas* that the Yádavas killed themselves. They had gone in large parties to the holy place of Prabbása. But what are holy places to unholy men? They indulged in drinking there and this proved their ruin. The evils of drinking had been found out at length by Krishna and some other Yádava leaders, and it was prohibited on pain of death by a public notification. But the prohibition had no effect. The drunken Yádavas at first quarrelled and then began to fight and kill one another. When some of Krishna's own sons were killed, he himself joined in the fight and killed a large number of his own people. He then went in search of Balaráma. He found him in a meditative posture and saw his spirit passing out of his body in the form of a large serpent, i.e., Sesa Nāga, the divine snake whom he had incarnated. Krishna now felt that it was time for him also to pass away. He then bade farewell to his father and his wives, telling them that he had sent for Arjuna, who would take charge of them. Then he seated himself under a tree, hidden by its leafy and outstretching branches, and composed his mind in meditation. While



thus sitting, a hunter named Jara mistook him for a deer and hit him with an arrow, one pointed with the last remaining bit of the fatal pestle. Discovering his mistake, the man fell at Krishna's feet and was pardoned and comforted by him. After this Krishna's spirit flew away to heaven, illumining all sides by its dazzling light. Arjuna came and proceeded towards Hastinapur with the surviving Yadavas,—men and women. But his good genius having left him, he had lost the power of his hitherto mighty arm and his unrivalled skill as an archer. A number of Abhiras, armed only with *latli*, attacked his party and carried off many of the women, and he reached Hastinapur only with a small remnant. After Arjuna's departure the sea engulfed Dvāraka, and nothing was left to speak of the Yādavas, their glories, their domestic broils and their revels.

THE END



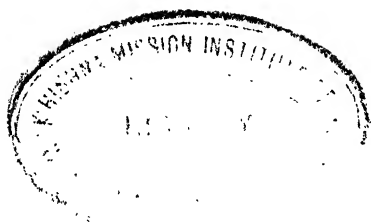












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